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Practical discourses

on

Several subjects.

by

Richard Fiddes

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To the Reverend

George Smalridge, D. D.

Dean of CARLISLE.

SIR,

'*TIS not from a Presumption, that these Discourses have any thing in them worthy of Your Patronage, that I am induc'd to Address them to You; but because, among other Reasons, which have determin'd me to do my self this Honour, I know no Method more proper to give them an extrinsick and current Value. 'Twill be natural for the Reader to conclude, that a Book which has Your Name before it, must be design'd at least to excel in all the Beauties of just and correct Writing.*

The Generality of Men, notwithstanding the pretended Light of our Age, are more

govern'd, in the Judgment they make of Books, by Authority and Example, than by Reason: Yet 'tis not altogether unreasonable they should be so, considering how few there are in Comparison who have any true Taste, or indeed Liberty of Mind.

I shall not dissemble it, that this implicit way of judging, discovers it self more or less in Persons of all Persuasions; tho' 'tis nowhere, I take it, more observable, than where it might least be expected, among Your great Pretenders to Liberty and Free-thinking; so that when 'tis the Interest or Inclination of those, who preside at the Head of them, that a Book should be well writ, the Author is no longer in Danger of being critically examin'd, or contradicted.

What I intend, Sir, is to take Advantage of this Passive Temper, so visible on every Side in the Submission which Men pay to the Judgment of their Superiors; and since they are so much agreed upon it, to regulate their Opinions by one great Name or another, I am certainly right in prefixing a Name to these Discourses, which is most likely to prepossess all Sorts of Readers in my Favour.

For

For amidst the Animosities, which have taken so deep Root, and spread themselves so wide among us, if there be any Person of Character, who universally keeps up the Respect due to it, and has no Enemies, we are told, and we sometimes hear Truth in this dark Corner of the World, that 'tis the Dean of CARLISLE.

This, Sir, *is the more for Your Honour, at a Time, wherein our intemperate Heats have tended so much to confound all Distinction of Merit; to make us pass wrong Judgments on Things and Persons, as well as Books; and most notoriously to incur the* Woe *the Spirit of God has denounc'd against those,* who call Evil good, and Good evil; who put Bitter for sweet, and Sweet for bitter.

'Tis surprizing to consider, how this way of judging by Passion and Party-Regards, in a Moment transforms a Man; so that he is differently represented in different Company, and sometimes in the same Company, as if he were not really the same Person.

This Spirit of Discord, which is gone out into the Nation, I wish I could not say into

the Church, *operates after a very different manner from* Ithuriel's *Spear in* Milton; *That caus'd the Tempter, when it was apply'd to him, to return from a borrow'd Shape to his own; the least Touch of This has a strange Power of changing a Man from his true and proper Form, to that, which, of all others, is the most unlike and abhorrent to it.*

To be able at such a Conjuncture to preserve a just Degree of Esteem and Veneration from all Men, discovers an Address, which few Persons have the Art or good Grace to distinguish themselves by; but shews withal, that Simplicity and godly Sincerity are very consistent with the nicest Maxims of human Prudence: Low and popular Condescensions may succeed for a Time, and under certain Ascendants, *yet they seldom fail in the Event, to render Men despised both by Enemies and Friends.*

But a reasonable Ardor in the Cause of Religion, temper'd with Modesty, *is highly commendable and praise-worthy, even in the Opinion of those, who out of some private Regards, hate the* Effects *of it.*

Here

Here I am sensible, from my mentioning a Quality so Conspicuous in You, that I am not so much to consider what ought *to be said, or what I am inclin'd to say of You, as what You will permit me to say. There seems indeed to be this Disadvantage in chusing a Patron, who is less conscious of his own Merit, that the greater his Talents are, the less Notice must be taken of them. An Author in this Case, and 'tis really a very hard Case upon him, must either resolve to offend, where his profess'd Design is to oblige, or else to disappoint a reasonable Expectation of the* Publick, *by stifling the brightest and most engaging Truths, that may be proper to entertain it.*

'Tis really Difficult to do Justice to a Person of Merit, without appearing to offer some Violence to his Modesty. *And for this Reason,* Sir, *were I really capable of coming up to it, I should not attempt to enlarge on one of the brightest Characters of the Age.*

I am in no small Pain for the imperfect Essay I have given of it already, when I consider, not to mention the numerous Criticks in Town, that it may some time possibly

bly reach the most learned University in the World, and which is still more formidable, that Part of it, where Wit is allow'd for so long a Term, to have chosen its peculiar Residence.

How shall I be able in general *to acquit my self of so bold an Address to those, who have seen You in the* Chair, *in the Pulpit, in the Convocation; when they are taking into Examination, what has been said, and after what manner?*

This is my Consolation, that whatever Persecution I may suffer from the Criticks for so uneaqual a Performance, You, Sir, *who have so remarkably on more Occasions, than one, distinguish'd Your self in Favour of the* Persecuted, *will be inclin'd to pardon, what was well, and respectfully intended.*

Sir, *I beg leave to add one word more as to the following Discourses: They have not, 'tis confess'd, some of them especially, been examin'd by me, with that Care and Caution, wherewith we ought always to prepare our selves in so polite an Age, for appearing*

in

in Publick; certain Avocations, which were unavoidable, hindred me from rendring them in some measure at least more correct.

If my Readers will be so kind as to pardon me some Escapes, which they will observe, for the sake of this plain and humble Confession, it shall be my Endeavour for the future, as I find Encouragement to go on in this Method, to shew a more exact and due Regard to the publick Taste, which I am sensible was never more refin'd.

I conclude with a thankful Acknowledgment for a very handsome and seasonable Instance of Your Kindness to,

SIR,

Your most Faithful and

Obedient Servant,

R. FIDDES.

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THE

SERMON I.

Innocence preferable to Repentance.

LUKE xv. 7.

I say unto you, That likewise Joy shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine Just Persons, which need no Repentance.

THE Design of our Saviour in these Words, is to encourage Sinners to Repentance, and to shew how willing God is to receive the greatest of them to Pardon and Grace upon it.

But this Goodness of God, which is design'd to *lead Sinners*, and which is in its own Nature a very engaging Motive to Repentance, is frequently abus'd by them to a quite contrary End and Intent. They *encourage themselves* from it in their Wickedness, in hopes that so good and merciful a God will still bear with them, and like an indulgent Father, be always ready to meet them in their Return to him. Nay, they conclude from the Words of my Text, That the longer they continue in a sinful impenitent State, the more acceptable, if not in some Degree meritorious, will their Repentance *at last* be.

For here, say they, in the Parable, which these Words are the Application of, a Sinner, to denote how great a Length he has run, is compar'd by our

Saviour to a Loſt Sheep; the owner of which is repreſented as very ſollicitous for recovering it; and having, after a diligent Search found it, he comes Home, and invites his Friends and Neighbours *to rejoice with him* upon the Occaſion.

By the Owner of the Sheep, we are here to underſtand the Great and Eternal God, *whoſe we are*, and from whom (in one Meaſure or other) *all of us*, as the Prophet ſpeaks, *like Sheep have gone aſtray*, Iſ. 53. 6. And by Friends and Neighbours, are further meant the Holy Angels, and chief Miniſters of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Likewiſe I ſay unto you, that Joy ſhall be in Heaven (*i. e.* as our Lord explains it at the 10th Verſe, *in the Preſence of the Angels of God*) *over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine juſt Perſons which need no Repentance.*

From what is here ſaid by our Saviour concerning the *Holy Angels*, ſome have taken Occaſion to pervert the Words to a very wrong Senſe in another Reſpect, and concluded from them, that theſe Bleſſed Spirits know our preſent Condition of Life, and the State of our Souls, and are therefore proper Objects of our Invocation and Worſhip.

In Oppoſition to both theſe falſe Concluſions from the Words before us, in Favour of a corrupt Worſhip, and a ſinful impenitent State of Life; I ſhall go upon the following Method; and ſhew (becauſe I intend to inſiſt more particularly on the Latter Point);

Firſt, That it can be no ways concluded, from this Text eſpecially, that the Holy Angels know any thing directly of our Circumſtances here below: Or admitting that they do, yet this would be no good Ground of our Praying to, or Worſhipping them.

Secondly, That there can be no Encouragement to any Sinner to go on in a ſinful impenitent Courſe

of

of Life, from what is ſaid of God's Rejoicing with his Holy Angels at the Repentance of a Sinner, more than over Ninety and Nine Juſt Perſons which need no Repentance; *nor* from any other Circumſtance of the Parable, which theſe Words are the Concluſion of.

1*ſt*. It can be no ways concluded, from this Text eſpecially, That the Holy Angels know any thing directly of our preſent Circumſtances. That they are Miniſtring Spirits, and maintain an Intercourſe between Heaven and Earth; That they are ſent forth by God to execute the Orders of his Will, and the Deſigns of his Providence in this World; and laſtly, That they know ſomething at leaſt of our External Conduct and Affairs, is what we reaſonably may conclude from other parts of Scripture. But the Words under Conſideration, and which are ſo commonly inſiſted on by the *Romaniſts*, to juſtify their Superſtitious Addreſſes to the Holy Angels, do not ſo much as prove that they perform even theſe General Offices, or that they know any Thing in any Reſpect, further than 'tis particularly *reveal'd* to them, of the Affairs of Human Life; and that for Two very good Reaſons from the Circumſtances of what is here ſpoken. For,

1. That which the Bleſſed Angels are here ſuppos'd to know, is the moſt difficult of all other Things in the World to be known: 'Tis the Repentance of a Sinner; not the External Acts of Humiliation which accompany it, but the Sincere and Inward Diſpoſition of his Heart, which *only* can be ſuppos'd to occaſion this Heavenly Joy; and which is not certainly known to the Sinner himſelf.

For how often are wicked Men deceived in their Good Purpoſes and Reſolutions of Amendment, even when their Conſciences ſeem moſt awaken'd, and

they discover many visible Signs to themselves and others, of a true and hearty Remorse for their Sins?

Those who Minister to sick Penitents, and whose Office frequently obliges them to attend in the Anti-chambers of Death, have, God knows, too many Occasions of observing this. With what Zeal and Passion will the greatest Libertines, under the Apprehension of Death, condemn and lament their former vicious course of Life? How earnestly will they resolve upon a Reformation, if God pleases to spare them, and give them further Space for putting their good *Resolutions* in Practice?

But how often still do such Penitents impose upon themselves, and upon all about them? How often are they seen to relapse into their former, or greater Impieties? Nay, is it not sometimes observable, that their criminal Passions renew in Proportion to the gradual Returns of Health; and that as the Sense of their Weakness abates, so does the seeming Strength of their Faith, and Seriousness of their Repentance.

Even Persons whose Hearts have not been altogether corrupted, and who in the main live under an awful Sense of Religion, are sometimes deceived in the Judgments they make of their own Resolutions; and thro' some extraordinary unhappy Circumstances of Temptation, are drawn in to do those Things, which, before their Passions or Interests were concern'd in them, they would have look'd upon with Horror and Detestation.

'Tis hard for the best of us to know the Sincerity of our own Hearts. We are assur'd however, that this Knowledge is too Excellent for any other created Being to attain unto: 'Tis the special Prerogative of that Infinite and Omnipresent Being, who is *greater than our Hearts, and knoweth all Things.*

Pardon

Pardon me, if I here take Notice of an Error, as I humbly conceive it, in the elegant Discourse of Archbishop *Tillotson* upon these Words. He supposes the Holy Angels may know the secret Bent and Disposition of our Hearts. He puts the Question, " Whether they may not come to this Knowledge, " by Virtue of their Ministry for the good of the " Elect; and so in their continual Intercourse be- " tween Heaven and Earth, bring to their Fellow- " Servants in Heaven, the joyful News of the Re- " pentance of Sinners upon Earth. He *afterwards adds*, " 'Tis impossible to determine this Matter.

But with all Deference to so great a Name, it seems evident, that whatever the Angels know of our Affairs in other Respects, yet they cannot know the secret Motions and Intentions of our Hearts, especially in the Work of Conversion, which 'tis so difficult for us to have any certain Knowledge of our selves: And yet without knowing this, 'tis impossible that the Angels, notwithstanding their continual Intercourse between Heaven and Earth, should be able to make any true and certain Report to their Fellow-Creatures in Heaven, of the Repentance of Sinners upon Earth.

So that this Text of Scripture, which is brought to prove that the Holy Angels have Knowledge of our Affairs, is of all others the most improper and insignificant to this End; because if it proves they know any thing relating to our present State, it proves too much, and supposes their Knowledge of what is impossible, (except the *Searcher of Hearts* reveal it to them,) to be known.

2. And therefore 'tis to be observ'd in the second Place, that the Occasion of their Joy is communicated to them from God. There is Joy in *the Presence* of the Angels of God, ἐνώπιον τῶν ἀγγέλων τοῦ Θεοῦ, before the Face, or in the Sight of the Angels of God; God manifests in a manner, 'tis neither needful, nor per-

haps possible for us at present to know, the Conversion of a Sinner to these his Celestial *Friends* and *Neighbours*; they do not inform him, nor bring the joyful News of it to one another.

Tho' 'tis probable, that the Son of God, who came to seek and save, that which *was lost*, being now set down at the Right Hand of his Father in Quality of our High-Priest, and as Head and Protector of the Church, this Joy may be more immediately Communicated from Him, and receive a sensible Addition from the Exultation of his human Nature, *wherewith He appears in the Presence of God for us*, Heb. 9. 24.

But further; admitting the Holy Angels have Knowledge of our present Affairs, or if you please, of our spiritual State, yet this can be no Ground for our praying to, or worshipping them. I would not willingly enter too far into Controversy; and therefore shall reduce what I have to say upon this Point to the following Particulars.

1*st*. That we have no Command in Scripture for the Invocation or Worship of Angels, nor Example to authorize or justify either; but we have both Precept, (*Col.* 2. 18.) and what amounts in Effect to a ruled Case to the contrary, *Rev.* 22. 9.

2. When Angels appear'd to Men in a Human Form, the Addresses that were made to them were Matter of civil Respect, and not of religious Adoration; except when the Divine *Logos* himself assum'd an Angel. But whatever Respect good Men might pay to the Angels, which as the Scriptures record, appear'd to them, yet their Example can be no Rule to us to address our selves to *distant* and invisible Powers.

3. Invocation of Angels is derogatory to the Honour of Christ, who intercedes for us in our own Nature; and having both a perfect Knowledge and compassionate Sense of our Wants, needs no intermediate Applications to him in our Behalf; for to this End, that

that He might be touch'd with our Infirmities, *He took not on him the Nature of Angels, but He took on Him the Seed of Abraham.* There were other Ends, 'tis granted, and many wise and excellent Ends of his Incarnation, but 'tis evident this was not the least considerable; particularly, *Heb.* 4. 15, 16. the Apostle makes the Incarnation of Christ an Argument, why we should in Confidence of his Favour and Compassion direct our Prayers immediately to him. For we *have not an High-Priest that cannot be touch'd with the feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all Points tempted like as we are, yet without Sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain Mercy, and find Grace to help in time of Need.*

4. Tho' the Holy Angels in the Discharge of their Ministry, may on certain Occasions, know our Circumstances, both with Respect to our Temporal and Spiritual State, yet it does not follow, that those Occasions are known to us, or that they can at all times hear our Prayers, or if they could, that they are authoriz'd to present them unto God; nay, we have very great Reason from the foregoing Consideration of Christ's *Mediatorial* Office to believe the contrary. But I proceed to what I principally propos'd to insist upon, *(viz.)*

2*dly*, That there can be no Encouragement to any Sinner to continue in a sinful impenitent State, from what is here said of God's rejoicing with his Holy Angels, at the Repentance *of a Sinner, more than over ninety and nine just Persons which need no Repentance*; nor from any other Circumstance of this Parable.

The Joy of the Holy Angels in the Presence of God is an Argument indeed, that the Repentance of a Sinner at any time is highly pleasing and acceptable unto him, but 'tis by no means an Argument, that *all* Sinners, especially such who have liv'd for any long time in a general Contempt of the Laws of Religion, shall have Time or Grace to repent; it rather

indeed implies the contrary; that Repentance to such Persons is a very hazardous and difficult Work, that their Condition is dangerous, and their Recovery at the best very doubtful.

For the Joy here mention'd does not arise from a fix'd and settled Complacency of Mind, but is a Joy of *Surprize* from an extraordinary or uncommon Accident: As when we have in a manner given any Thing over for lost, the Recovery of it by one Casualty or other, causes in us a more sensible Joy, than for the Time many other superior Advantages, which we stand possess'd of; the Mind of Man being so limited, that any one moving Pleasure or Satisfaction at a time, in a great Measure takes up the Capacity of it.

'Tis by way of Accommodation to this imperfect State of Human Nature, that we are to understand the Joy of the Holy Angels in the Presence of God upon a Sinner's Repentance; *Namely*, such a Joy as arises from an Accident or Event, which morally speaking, there was no great Probability or Expectation of.

For indeed, to carry on a while the Metaphor of a lost Sheep, what reasonable, what tolerable Grounds can any Sinner have to expect, that if he forsake the Paths of Virtue and Innocence to wander in the dark and intricate Ways of Sin; or to express my self in the beautiful and significant Language of the Book of *Wisdom*, if he *err from the Way of Truth, to weary himself in the Way of Wickedness and Destruction, and to go through the Desarts, where no Way lies*, Wisd. 5. 7. where I say, is the Hope of such a Sinner, that he shall be able to recover himself, and return? The further he goes and entangles himself, will it not be still more difficult for him to find his Way out; and will he not at the same time render those Means and Endeavours which are made use of *to find him*, still more difficult and ineffectual.

I am

I am ſenſible Men are apt to think, that how vicious and irregular ſoever their Lives have been, yet there can be nothing more eaſy to them than at any time to put in Practice a Deſign ſo very juſt and reaſonable, as that of repenting and turning to God, and doing what they are convinc'd they ought to do.

The Juſtice and Reaſonableneſs of ſuch a Deſign, is indeed what we are every one *convinc'd* of; but if it be withal ſo eaſy to put in Practice, as the Sinner ſuppoſes, why does he not out of Hand ſet about it? If he was not able to beat down his ſinful Paſſions, while he was but yet entring upon a wicked courſe of Life, or had not proceeded very far in it, why ſhould he imagine himſelf capable of making a more vigorous Stand or Reſiſtance againſt future Temptation? If he will not retreat while Conſcience is yet tender, and he has ſome Strength and good Diſpoſition of Mind left, what Probability can there be of his maintaining the Combat, when the Enemy ſtill advances, and every Moment ſtreightens, and gains Ground upon him.

For here the Alluſion to a loſt Sheep leaves us; every ſtep a Sinner takes in an evil Courſe, is not only a further Remove from the Paths of Virtue and Innocence, but renders him at once more unable and more unwilling to return into them: In Proportion as his ſinful Paſſions and Inclinations are indulg'd, the greater Power they get over him, and ſo much the more Time, and Pains, and Force of Mind will be requir'd to ſubdue them, eſpecially if they be grown up into confirm'd and ſettled Habits.

All Habits naturally, or rather mechanically produce in us a Facility of Action; and many Things we accuſtom ourſelves to, tho' at firſt troubleſome, which by Degrees grow eaſy, and in time pleaſant and delightful: but Sin ſtrikes early in with our Tempers and Inclinations; it approaches us with deluding Smiles, and promiſes *preſent* Delight and Satisfaction.

Now

Now we are never ſooner put to flight, than when we take the Field againſt Pleaſure; for we would be always happy, and by neceſſary Conſequence always *pleas'd*.

When therefore any ſinful Inclination is become habitual to us, when it has got the Dominion over our Hearts; when it has for a long time defil'd the Imagination, and (as it commonly happens) *infatuated* our Reaſon; how diſcouraging muſt the Attempt, how painful the Endeavour be, to recover our former Freedom, and the Power over our ſelves we have ſo ſhamefully loſt? Conſider it, my Brethren, a little further: When a Sinner has brought himſelf into this ſlaviſh and wretched Condition, when the very Deſire of being freed from his Chains is become difficult to him, and yet he ſins with a deſign of Taking up, and Repenting one time or other; How vain and ſenſeleſs, how full of Contradiction does ſuch a Deſign appear? And what Probability, or rather indeed what *Poſſibility* is there of hoping for any good Effect from it?

'Tis true, that which is impoſſible to Men, (or which in all Human Expectation they can have no Reaſon to hope for) is poſſible to God; and God does ſometimes by an extraordinary Grace awaken ſuch an habitual Sinner to a juſt Senſe of his Sins, and bring him to Repentance: But extraordinary Events, and ſpecial Acts of Grace, are not to be drawn into ſtanding Rules of Life in any Caſe, much leſs in a Caſe, upon which the Happineſs or Miſery of a Man depends to all Eternity.

But is it, after all, no Encouragement to a Sinner to continue for ſome time longer in an impenitent State, that if he live to repent at laſt, there will be more Joy in Heaven over him, than over Ninety and nine Juſt Perſons which need no Repentance? This is what the Method I propos'd requires, I ſhould particularly conſider. And in Anſwer to what is here

here ſaid, we grant; If theſe Words imported that Repentance is more acceptable to God than a State of Innocence, or that he will reward it in ſome more ſignal and extraordinary manner; a Sinner that delays his Converſion in hopes of an After-Repentance, would have ſomething more to ſay for himſelf: For where we have a Proſpect of a very great and conſiderable Return, by running a Hazard, 'tis the more excuſable at leaſt to do it: But the Words import neither of theſe Things.

1. They do not import that Repentance is more acceptable to God, than a State of Innocence: The Joy in Heaven here ſpoken of, is, as we obſerv'd before, a tranſient Joy of Surprize, or a ſudden Exultation of Mind, ariſing from an extraordinary or unexpected Event. *Of* God, we are to underſtand this Joy in the ſame Senſe we do other Paſſions, when attributed to him after the manner of Men, and by way of Condeſcenſion to our imperfect Notions of Things. As to the Holy Angels, I ſee no Reaſon why they may not on ſo happy an Occaſion be mov'd and affected with Joy, in a more ſenſible manner. But we can no more conclude from hence, that Repentance is Matter of greater Joy to God and his Holy Angels, than Innocence; than we can ſuppoſe, that a Man ought to ſet a greater Value upon a Sheep that he has loſt, and regain'd, than upon his whole Flock beſides; or that a piece of Money we have dropp'd or miſlaid, and unexpectedly found, receives thereby an intrinſick Value, and will be current for more than a hundred other Pieces of the ſame Stamp.

But further. By Juſt Men, which need no Repentance, we are not to underſtand Men perfectly Innocent; but ſuch as have liv'd ſo, that they may be denominated (as we ſay) Juſt *à majori*, from the general Bent and Tenor of their Lives. If we were to take the Words in a ſtrict Senſe, our Lord would

ſup-

ſuppoſe a Caſe which never happens. For according to the full and ſtrict Demands of Juſtice, *ſhall no Man living be juſtified.* The Words therefore, according to a uſual way of ſpeaking in the Holy Scriptures, expreſs abſolutely, what is only to be underſtood in a comparative Senſe; and ſignify to us, that thoſe extraordinary Acts of Penance and Humiliation, thoſe bitter Conflicts with Sin and Temptation, are not neceſſary in the ſame Meaſure and Degree, to Perſons that conſcientiouſly endeavour to ſerve God, tho' ſubject to a great many Frailties and Eſcapes; as they are to Sinners, that muſt change their whole courſe of Life, and undergo the Pangs of the New Birth all at once. Now theſe great Difficulties, which habitual Sinners and late Penitents have to ſurmount, do (it muſt be own'd) render their Repentance a very brave and commendable Work, and upon that Account put them more upon a Level with thoſe, who have been all along more careful to preſerve their Purity and Innocence; yet 'tis far from proving, except in ſuch uncommon Caſes, as I ſhall afterwards take notice of, that late Penitents are more in the Eſteem and Favour of God, than thoſe who have endeavour'd to ſerve him truly *all the Days of their Life.* And then,

2. If a late Repentance do not entitle a Sinner to the greater favour of God, what Grounds can he have to hope from it a greater Reward? For according to the main Deſign and Tenor of the Goſpel, and the Method wherein the Judge of the World will proceed at the laſt Day, the different Degrees of Reward in another Life, are not to be proportion'd to the Circumſtances of a *particular* Repentance, but to the *patient Continuance* of Men *in well-doing*, throughout the *General* Courſe of their Lives, *Rom.* 2. 6, 7, 8.

Has a late Penitent then, or one who has been reclaim'd from a long Cuſtom and Continuance in Sin,

no

no Advantage in any Case, of a Person, who has in the main discharg'd a good Conscience, and led a sober and regular Life?

I answer, that in *some* Cases he may; however, not from any Argument that can be drawn directly from the Words of my Text, but from other accidental and extraordinary Circumstances. As,

1. Where a late Penitent is call'd to confess some important Truth of Religion, or to be an eminent Example of the Power of Christian Faith and Fortitude. In such a Case, the Nature and Quality of his Repentance, may more than over-balance the ordinary and slow Advances of Piety in other Men. And this seems to have been a very considerable Circumstance of the Case of the Penitent Thief. It is suppos'd by Divines, that he had heard before of our Saviour, and the Miracles done by him; but I conceive, it is beyond Supposition that he *had*. We cannot so fully apprehend, why our Lord should have given so signal a Testimony of his Confession, if it had proceeded merely from a sudden Transport of Zeal, and not from any rational Motives or Grounds of Conviction; however his confessing Christ at a time when his familiar Friends and Disciples had forsaken him, and when he seem'd to be in Circumstances so very unsuitable to his Character of the Messiah, was so noble and generous an act of Faith, that our Lord immediately made him that glorious Promise upon it, *This Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*

2*dly*, When an habitual Sinner that repents, lives to do Works meet for Repentance, and by his exemplary Piety or charitable Admonitions, is an Instrument of reclaiming others from the Error, or Evil of their Ways. By bringing forth these generous Fruits of Repentance, we at once do Glory to God, and the greatest Good we are capable of doing to Men. Accordingly there are very advantagious Things spoken

ken in Scripture, of those who are the happy Occasion, either of bringing such as are in Error to the *Acknowledgment of Truth*, or of turning the Hearts of the Disobedient to the Wisdom of the Just. *He that converteth a Sinner*, saith the Apostle, *from the Error of his Ways, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a Multitude of Sins.* The Prophet *Daniel* speaks no less magnificently of those, who under God, are the means of bringing others to Repentance; *They that turn many to Righteousness, shall shine as the Stars for ever and ever*, Dan. 12. 3.

3*dly*, When a late Penitent devotes himself entirely to the Service of God; when he distinguishes himself by extraordinary Acts of Piety or Charity, of Humiliation and Self-denial; when he is careful to *redeem the Time*, by laying hold of, and improving every Occasion that offers, of doing Honour to God, and *going on* still to Perfection. Such a Penitent, I say, by this his After-Care and Double-Diligence, may in some Measure compensate for his former loss of Time, and come up with those, or perhaps put before them, who set out sooner, but kept on at a more moderate and easy Pace.

These, 'tis confess'd, are sometimes the Circumstances of late Penitents, and they prove indeed that true and sincere Repentance is never too late; but they do not prove, that a late Repentance is always true; or that a Sinner shall live to repent; or, if he should, that his Repentance would be attended with these Circumstances; and therefore there can be no Ground or Reason, from them, of his continuing in an impenitent State. If we will act wisely, we are not to govern our Conduct by uncommon Cases, but by the most probable and ordinary Event of Things.

It only remains, that I should consider in the last Place, whether there be any other Circumstances in this Parable, which may give the least Encouragement to a Sinner, to go on still in an impenitent State,

upon

upon a Presumption, that at last he shall occasion the *Joy in Heaven* here spoken of.

The Passage most likely to be misapply'd to this End, is, That the Owner of the lost Sheep is said to go after it till he find it. The good Woman that had lost a piece of Money, lights a Candle, sweeps her House, and *seeks diligently* till she find it. These parabolical Expressions are interpreted by the *Calvinists*, in favour of effectual Vocation; they conclude from them, That whoever is of the Number of those Sheep, for whom Christ laid down his Life, tho' at present he does not experience in himself any Evidences of his Salvation or Conversion, yet God will one time or other *own* and convert him by an irresistible Power of his Grace.

Now upon this Supposition the most profligate Sinners may indeed have some faint Hopes, that their Day of Grace is yet to come; but till it do come, they conclude agreeably enough to their Principles, that it is to no Purpose for them to be at any Pains about Religion, or the subduing their sinful Habits, seeing all their Endeavours to this End would be vain and fruitless, and even their best Actions no better than *splendid* Sins; they think 'tis as well to sit down, and await the due time of their Vocation: God may call them at the sixth Hour, or perhaps at the eleventh Hour: His *Call* they assure themselves will be efficacious, and overcome all Difficulties whatever, arising from their evil Dispositions, or Habits. But,

In answer to this, I desire to lay before you the following Considerations.

1*st*, That the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard here alluded to, does not relate to the sanctifying Grace of God in the Conversion of particular Sinners, but of the Grace of his Dispensations in general, in admitting Persons at several Periods of Time into the Communion and Privileges of his Church. But supposing this Parable was primarily intended to signi-

ſignify, that God is willing at all times to receive penitent Sinners to Favour, yet it does not follow that all Perſons will be obedient to the *Heavenly Call*, or that the Spirit of God will effectually operate Saving-Grace in them; thoſe eſpecially, who have been call'd upon to God's Service, from the time they were capable of refuſing the Evil and chuſing the Good; thoſe to whom God has ſtretch'd out his Hand all the Day long; to whom his Word has been preach'd, his Sacraments adminiſtred, and who have *been* beſeech'd over and over in *Chriſt's ſtead to be reconcil'd to God*; ſuch Offenders certainly have the leaſt Reaſon to hope, that the Spirit of God will always ſtrive with them, and at laſt forcibly overcome them to Repentance, without any Motion or Concurrence of their own towards it. But they have great Reaſon to apply to themſelves that Commination of God by *Solomon*, Prov. 1. 24, 25, 26. *Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have ſtretch'd out my Hand, and no Man regarded; but ye have ſet at nought all my Counſel, and would none of my Reproof: I alſo will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh*, &c.

2. If an irreſiſtible Grace be neceſſary to the Converſion of Sinners, it evidently follows, that no Perſon could have been converted, before he actually was converted; and therefore that all the Expoſtulations, all the Precepts and Promiſes, and Comminations of Scripture, which were made uſe of to perſuade him to Repentance, were but ſo many more pompous and ſolemn Colluſions, without any real Intention on God's part to produce the Effect, they ſo evidently appear'd to propoſe. A Conſequence which a juſt Concern for the Honour and Perfection of the Divine Attributes will by no means ſuffer us to admit.

3. The main Foundation upon which this Doctrine of irreſiſtible Grace would ſupport it ſelf is falſe. 'Tis ſuppos'd from thoſe metaphorical Expreſ-

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sions in Scripture, which represent Men in an unregenerate State, as *blind* and as *dead* in Trespasses and Sins, that they are altogether *Passive* in the Work of Regeneration; that of themselves they have no more Capacity to receive the saving Truths of Religion, or to do any thing that has the least Tendency to what is good in any Respect, than a Man who has perfectly lost his Sight, is able to distinguish Colours, or a dead Man to raise himself to Life again. Now, upon this Supposition, 'twould be, in the *first place*, as insignificant to exhort Unbelievers to embrace the Christian Faith, and to reason with them upon the particular Truths of it, (which yet was the Method both our Lord and his Apostles frequently took) as if you should advise a blind Man to open his Eyes to the Light, and shew him how unreasonable it is, that he should still resolve to keep them shut against it. Besides, if Figurative Allusions in Scripture were always to be taken in a strict Sense, we may argue by Parity of Reason, that because Christians are said to have *the Eyes of their Understanding enlightened*, and are call'd *Light in the Lord*, 'tis not possible for them to fall into Error; contrary to known Fact, to what is acknowledg'd on all Sides, and to what our Blessed *Saviour* himself evidently supposes in those Words, *Mat.* 6. 23. *If the Light that is in thee be Darkness, how great is that Darkness?*

So again, if by being dead in Trespasses and Sins, we are to understand Men in a State *perfectly* passive, and insensible to all Impressions of Religion; besides that all Exhortations to them to Religious Duties, would equally be unnecessary, not to say impertinent; we may as reasonably conclude, that since the Regenerate are said, *Rom.* 6. 11. to be *dead unto Sin*, therefore they are absolutely impeccable, and have not so much as the least Motion to Sin, or *Principle* of Concupiscence remaining in them.

In short, to build Doctrines of Religion upon the Ornamental Passages which are mention'd in the Parables of Scripture, for the more agreeable Turn of them, or upon any other Metaphorical Expressions in it, is to pervert the Rule of our Faith, to patronize the most dangerous and destructive Errors; to make it capable of asserting any Thing, and for that Reason of proving Nothing. And that the Expressions I have mention'd cannot be interpreted agreeable to the Analogy of Faith, in the Sense of the *Calvinists*, is clear from those Passages of Scripture, which directly suppose in Sinners, the Freedom and Concurrence of their Wills, in the Work of their Conversion. Such is that of our Saviour, *Joh.* 5. 40. *Ye will not come to me, that ye might have Life.* He complains to the same Effect, in a very tender and compassionate manner, of the *Jews*, *Mat.* 23. 37. that tho' *he would have gather'd them together, yet they would not.* Which Words, as far as we can argue from the proper Signification of Words, plainly import these Two Things; that the Will or Desire of Jesus Christ, for the Salvation of Sinners, is not always efficacious; and, that the Disappointment of it, is wholly owing to the Abuse of our Liberty. There are other Texts, which as fully import, that a good Use of our Liberty is necessary to render the Grace of God effectual. Such is that of our Blessed Saviour, wherein he calls upon Sinners with so sensible a Concern *to come unto him*, Matth. 11. 28. Agreeable to which kind and engaging Invitation, are these Words, *Rev.* 3. 20. *Behold I stand at the Door, and knock; if any Man hear my Voice, and open the Door, I will come into him, and will sup with him, and he with me.*

5. I shall but urge one Argument more against this Doctrine of *Invincible Grace*; and that shall be taken from the Parable of the Talents. There our Lord represents God Almighty, as distributing to Men the Graces

Graces of his Holy Spirit, in different Measures and Degrees. And this Method of God's Dealing with his Creatures, is highly agreeable to our common Notions of Justice: Because Acts of Goodness and Liberality are free; and God, by dispensing his Heavenly Favours more *liberally* to one Person, does another Person no *Wrong*. Accordingly we observe in Fact, that there are some Persons of a more shining, eminent and uniform Piety than others; *Some*, under such favourable Circumstances with respect to natural Temper, virtuous Principles, and a religious Conversation, that they seem to have their Faces set, as it were, towards *Sion*, and to be in a Disposition at least, which very much tends to *facilitate* the Operations of Grace. But we say withal, that there are none of us to whom God has not committed a *sufficient* Measure of his Grace, to enable us to *work out our own Salvation*. And this is what we argue from the very Condemnation of that unprofitable Servant, who had but One Talent committed to him. For, either it was given him with a Design that he should *profit* withal by it, or it was not. If it were given him with this Design, the Point we contend for is gain'd: If it were not, how shall we account for the Wisdom and Sincerity of God, in requiring this poor Wretch to do what was absolutely impossible to be done? But much less shall we be able to vindicate the Justice of God in punishing him, ay, and in condemning him to the greater Punishment, for what he could not help? *Mat.* 25. 30. This is not an Argument drawn from a foreign Circumstances, or mere Incident of the Parable, but from one principal Scope and Design of it; which is to shew us, that as the Means of Grace are committed to us with a sincere Intention on God's Part that we should *profit* under them; so at the Great Day of Account, we shall severely answer for our Contempt and *Abuse* of them.

Having gone thro' the ſeveral Particulars I propos'd to ſpeak to, I ſhall draw a ſhort Inference or two from what has been ſaid, and ſo conclude. And,

1. If the Repentance of a Sinner be ſo pleaſing to God, that he communicates the joyful Notice of it to his Holy Angels; then certainly, as we would ſincerely endeavour to *pleaſe* God, we ought (next to our own Converſion) to contribute what we are able to the Converſion of others. The Charge of the Apoſtle is general, and concerns all Chriſtians; *Heb.* 3. 13. *Exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of Sin.*

But thoſe to whom the Word of Reconciliation is committed, and whoſe peculiar Office it is to beſeech Men in Chriſt's ſtead to be reconcil'd to God; ſuch Perſons, I ſay, can give no Account of their Miniſtry to God, to themſelves, or others, if they neglect any Opportunity of inſtructing Men in their Duty, or exhorting them to the Practice of it; if they are not *inſtant in Seaſon, and out of Seaſon:* That is, if they do not exceed the common Meaſures of Chriſtian Zeal to theſe Ends, and lay themſelves out in all the proper Ways and Means of bringing Sinners to Repentance, *whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear.*

An Obligation ariſes to Perſons of the Sacred Order, from the Nature of their Office, to promote, as they have Opportunity, the Spiritual Good and Edification of all Men: But ſtill 'tis more eſpecially incumbent on them, to take care of thoſe who are of their own Houſhold, and more immediately committed to their Charge. How then will they anſwer this Obligation, of endeavouring the *Converſion* of thoſe they are ſet over in the Lord, who flie to ſome remote and lazy Retreat from them, and do not ſo much as *converſe* with them; except perhaps on certain

tain Occasions, when the main Business that brings them together, is observ'd not to be of a Spiritual, but Temporal Consideration?

I do not hereby intend, but that there are many justifiable Occasions, upon which those who have the Cure of Souls may for a time be call'd away from their Flocks: The Laws of the Church allow of it in special Cases: But except where they dispense, and the Dispensation can be pleaded *bonâ Fide*, there for Pastors to leave a Work which it principally concerns them to attend, as *They* that must give an Account; and for which the Best, and Wisest, and Ablest of Men complain of their Insufficiency; to leave such a Work, I say, to be carry'd on *wholly* by Deputation, and that perhaps of raw unexperienc'd Youth, is what nothing can be said in excuse of, when either we consider the Duties of the Pastoral Office in general, or the solemn and particular Engagement, the Clergy enter into, when they take it upon them.

2*dly*, From the familiar Method our Saviour here makes use of, to instruct Men in their Duty, those who labour in the Word and Doctrine, may learn how to discharge this part of their Function to the best Effect; and that is, by stooping to the Capacity of their Hearers, and forwarding their Notices of Divine Truths by easy and sensible Representations. The Son of God did not, we see, disdain to refer in his Heavenly Instructions, to the most common and ordinary Occurrences of Human Life. Let his Example be a Rule to us: Let us consider, that all Persons are not capable of attending to the pure Light of Reason; and that to such as are not, we ought as much as possible to shew Virtue in a Light, that strikes their Senses; or however, to make it our principal Design to instruct Men in all saving Truths, and teach them the Fear of the Lord in *Simplicity* and godly Sincerity. Above all Things, in our Discourses to

the People, we ought to avoid Philoſophical and nice Speculations, which are too high for them, and all ſuch foreign Arguments, as may give them Occaſion to ſuſpect, that we preach not *Jeſus Chriſt*, but our ſelves.

3*dly*, and Laſtly, From what has been ſaid, we may infer the great Advantages of an early Piety: Thoſe that have been ſo happy as to preſerve their Innocency from their tender Years, have ſecur'd to themſelves theſe Two great and unſpeakable Advantages; that they are neither expos'd to thoſe Difficulties, which late Penitents muſt expect to combat with, before they can get the better of their evil Habits; nor to the uncertainty of a *future* Space, wherein to work out their Salvation by a ſincere Repentance. And both theſe are very powerful Conſiderations to recommend to young Perſons, an early Dedication of themſelves to the Service of God, tho' it ſhould be granted, that a late Repentance were equally acceptable to him. For all prudent Perſons will think themſelves concern'd to make a Work which is neceſſary to their Happineſs, as eaſy as they can, and in the ſame View will forecaſt, that they may have ſufficient Time and Opportunity to do it in.

If you have wanted this ineſtimable Advantage of remembring *your Creator in the Days of your Youth*, and for want of it have liv'd hitherto in a general Neglect of your Duty, or brought your ſelves under the Power of any dangerous ſinful Habits, yet conſider, 'tis ſtill by the Grace of God in your Power to reſtore your ſelves, upon a hearty Repentance, to his Favour; and the longer you delay to ſet about it, you will have at once leſs Inclination to it, and leſs Power to conflict with the Difficulties of it; tho' you ſhould, which yet you can have no Aſſurance of, have further time granted you for it. Let me therefore exhort you in the Words of the Prophet *Jer.* 18. 11, 12.

Return

Return you now *every one from his evil Way, and make your Ways and your Doings good.*

For the Design of what has been said, is not to discourage the greatest Sinners from Repentance, but to exhort them to it, and shew them the Danger of continuing any longer in an impenitent State; 'tis much better to prevent a Disease, than to be at the Charge and Pains, and run the Risque of a Cure; but when 'tis come to this, that the Distemper has seiz'd us, we ought to endeavour the Cure, and no further delay the proper Methods of it. What I chiefly intend, is, That could we really be secure of recovering our selves, and getting to Heaven at last by a *late* Repentance, yet an innocent and religious Course of Life has always the Advantage of such a Repentance, except in those uncommon and extraordinary Cases, which no Sinner *in particular* has reasonable Grounds to believe will be his *own* Case.

SERMON II.

Of Partaking in other Men's Sins; and of the Motives upon which we are more usually induced to do it.

EPHES. v. 11.

Have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness.

WHEN we are instrumental in converting Sinners from the Evil of their Ways, and bringing them to Repentance, we engage in the Designs of God; we labour in the same glorious *Work* with his Ministers, the Holy Angels; we occasion to our *Fellow-Labourers* a fresh Scene of Joy in Heaven. And one would think it needless to persuade Christians to so just, so charitable and heavenly an Employment, and withal so Beneficial to themselves.

Yet there are Christians, or such as profess themselves so, who instead of using their Endeavours to persuade Sinners to repent and turn to God, enter into a sinful Commerce with them, and so go over as it were to the opposite Interests of Hell, and the Powers of Darkness; and serve the *Designs* of that wicked Spirit, *who* still *works in the Children of Disobedience*. 'Tis to caution you and my self against so sinful

sinful and dangerous a Commerce, that I have made Choice of these Words for the Subject of my present Discourse. *Have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness:* μὴ συγκοινωνεῖτε, Do not communicate with, or be Partakers of them; for so the Word is render'd, *Phil.* 4. 14. and *Rev.* 18. 4.

To have Fellowship therefore with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, is, in any kind or degree, to contribute to, or partake of other Mens Crimes: And therefore, in discoursing on the Words,

First, I shall enquire in what Respects we may be said to do this.

Secondly, I shall consider the Motives, upon which Men are more usually induc'd to do it.

Thirdly, I shall conclude with a Practical Improvement or two of what has been said.

First, I am to enquire, in what Respects we may be said to partake of other Mens Sins.

Now this may be done either more indirectly, and without any particular ill Intention; or more expressly, with a real and form'd Design of encouraging Vice. And tho' in this latter Case, 'tis true, we involve our selves more deep in other Mens Crimes, yet in the former, we are more or less, as Circumstances vary, Partakers of them. I shall therefore speak particularly to both these Cases. And

1*st*. We more indirectly partake of other Mens Sins, when we either forbear to make use of our Authority to *prevent* their Sinning, or omit to give them proper and good *Advice*, or to *reprove* them; or lastly, when by our *Discourses*, or *Writings*, or *Example*, we become the *Occasions* of Sin to them.

1. When we forbear to make use of our Authority to *prevent* their Sinning. Magistrates, Parents and Masters, and those who have the Cure of Souls, are particularly concern'd under this Head; because the very

very Nature and Design of the Relation they stand in to the Sinner, obliges them to be the *Ministers of God* to him, and to keep him from falling into Sin. So that by the Abuse of that Just Authority, whereby they might have laid convenient and wholesome Restraints upon him, they are evidently so far accountable for the Disorders he is guilty of. Thus with respect to Spiritual Pastors and Teachers, whose Office it is to warn the Wicked from their wicked Ways, to save their Life; God threatens indeed, that if such wicked Men continue impenitent, they shall die in their Iniquity; but he threatens notwithstanding, that he will require their Blood at the Hands of those, thro' whose Supineness or Neglect they were not recover'd out of the dangerous State they were in, *Ezek.* 3. 18. And 'tis probably in Allusion to this Passage, that St. *Paul* professes himself *pure from the Blood of all Men*, in that he had strictly and faithfully discharg'd his Pastoral Duty, and not omitted to declare, as there was Occasion, *all the Counsel of God*, Acts 20. 26, 27.

With respect to the Paternal Office, we have a memorable Example in Old *Eli*, of the Guilt which Parents contract by a Criminal Indulgence to their Children, or neglecting to interpose their Authority, in order to reclaim them from their Evil Courses. The Sons of this too easy and indolent Father, had given very great and publick Scandal, by a Prophanation which 'tis almost an Indecency to mention, and in an Instance which more peculiarly affected his Sacred Character. One would have thought that *Eli*, upon such a high and notorious Provocation, should have at once exerted both the Father and the Magistrate to *smite* the *Scorners*, and not have contented himself *with* such a soft and easy Expostulation, as, *Why do ye such Things?* And, *Nay, my Sons it is no good Report that I hear:* A Reproof, if it may be call'd so,

ſo, which diſcovers that he was not ſo much concern'd for the Offence his Sons had given, as cautious (forſooth) of giving Offence to them: And therefore he is expreſly charg'd with *honouring his Sons above God*; and the Contempt they had done the Worſhip of God, is threaten'd to be viſited upon him, and his Poſterity, as his own proper Act; 1 *Sam.* 2. 29, 30.

Thus whatever Poſt or Capacity we are in, which puts us under a ſpecial Obligation of preventing or reclaiming Sinners, and gives our Advice or Reproof of them a ſuperior Force; in caſe of our Neglect, the Reaſon of our being reſponſible for their Crimes is the ſame. Tho' we do indeed contract a higher Degree of Guilt in Proportion to the greater Authority we have over them.

This is a Conſideration which ſhews, how unjuſt the Prejudices of thoſe Perſons are, and there are ſuch in the World, who take diſtaſte at the Clergy for their free Reproof of certain Points they deſire to be *eaſy* in, or for teaching in general a juſt and ſtrict Morality. But what would theſe Men have us do? Would they have their *Blood* requir'd at our Hands? Would they have us, whom they are forward to charge with Crimes enough of our own, to be chargeable with theirs too?

'Tis a ſtrange thing, Men are offended at the Strictneſs of the Morals we teach, and yet theſe very Men ſhould we teach a more looſe Morality, ſhould we go about to palliate, or excuſe Vice in any kind, would look upon us, and they would have ſome Reaſon for it, with the utmoſt Scorn and Diſdain. They ſay, the Rules of Life we preſcribe are too ſevere; but ſhould we pretend to diſpenſe with the Severity, as they ſuppoſe it, of them, why, then again they would ſay, that we proſtitute our Character, and forfeit all the Reſpect due to it.

What ſhall we do to oblige Men, that are reſolv'd to take up Prejudices againſt us at any rate, and whether

ther we be faithful in the Discharge of our Duty or not? 'Tis the only Rule in this, as in all other Cases, wherein our Reputation is concern'd, not to amuse our selves with what the World may think or say of us, but to satisfy our own Reason and Conscience in what we do. And in Truth, 'tis a most vain and fruitless, and *endless* Endeavour to act by any other Rule.

But what I am to observe in the next Place, affects all Christians in general; 'tis the Duty of every one of us, to give other Persons proper and good Advice, when by that means we may be the happy Occasions of hindring them from falling into Sin, or of recovering them when fallen; and therefore under such a capacity we become Partakers of other Men's Crimes.

2*dly*, When we omit to *advise* them. And the Reason of this is evident, because 'tis both a Duty of Piety and of positive Command, that we should admonish one another; that we should consult the proper means of mutual Edification; *and exhort one another daily, lest any of us be hardned the Deceitfulness of Sin*, Heb. 3. 13. A word of Advice spoken in Season, charitably design'd, and pertinently apply'd, tho' from a Person who has no direct Authority over us, yet carries a great Weight and Authority along with it: For there are few Men so far lost to all Sense of Religion, as not to yield to the Force of Truth, when 'tis set in a clear and true Light before them. Indeed the best of Men have need of a constant Monitor; the Capacity of our Minds is so narrow, that we cannot distinctly attend to all the Duties of Religion at all times, and our Memory so frail, that we cannot on every Occasion recollect the proper and particular Motives to our Duty, and therefore frequently want to be *stirr'd up*, both by wholesome Advice, and by being *put in Remembrance*.

Yet

Yet I do not hereby intend, that we ſhould take upon us at all Adventures to give other Perſons religious Advice, tho' we really mean well by it; for this being an Office of Prudence and Diſcretion, great Caution and Addreſs is to be us'd in it; neither all Times, nor all Places, nor all Perſons are fit for it. And therefore all I deſign is, where favourable Circumſtances concur to render our Advice proper and effectual to reſtrain other Men from Sin, in ſuch Caſes, and in ſuch only, we are oblig'd to give it, as we would free our ſelves from all Imputation of their Sin. The ſame Limitation is to be obſerv'd, with reſpect to what I am to ſhew in the next Place.

3*dly*, That we may be in ſome ſort accountable for the Sins of other Men, by neglecting to *reprove* them. Accordingly our Neglect to reprove a Sinner, is in the very Command of this Duty, expreſſed by *ſuffering Sin* upon him, *Lev.* 19. 17. An Expreſſion which imports ſomething more than our being *indirectly* the Occaſion of his continuing in Sin; but I do not inſiſt upon that. My Buſineſs is to obſerve, that this is a Duty, under proper Regulations, generally incumbent on Men, *Thou ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy Neighbour*. Here is no Exception, either as to the Perſon reproving, or to be reproved: But becauſe there is ſcarce any Duty of Religion of greater Nicety, or which requires more Prudence in the Diſcharge of it; I ſhall not enlarge upon it here, but reſerve it for the Subject of a following and particular Diſcourſe; and proceed,

4*thly*, To ſhew, that Men may partake of the Crimes of other Perſons, by their *Diſcourſes*, their *Writings*, or *Example*. I do not hereby ſuppoſe, but that we may directly and deſignedly by all theſe Methods contribute to the Sins of other Men, and ſo contract the Guilt of them; but I am only conſidering at preſent how far they are guilty of other Mens Sins, who are in any of theſe Reſpects the Occaſion

of

of corrupting them, tho' without any particular and direct Intention.

1*ſt*, By their *Diſcourſes*, or the Scope they give their Tongues in Converſation. This is the rather to be obſerv'd, becauſe there are Perſons, not altogether vitiated, who out of an Inclination to be entertaining, or to ſhew they have Wit, do now and then allow themſelves Liberties in their way of Talk, which are not to be examin'd ſtrictly by thoſe Rules of the Goſpel, of taking Care that *our Speech be always with Grace*, Col. 4. 6. and, of *letting no corrupt Communication come out of our Mouth*, but ſuch *as may tend to the Uſe of Ediſying, that it may miniſter Grace to the Hearers.*

Not that we are forbid the chearful innocent Freedoms of Diſcourſe, or a more bright and lively Thought, which conduces to keep up the Spirit or heighten the Pleaſures of Converſation; but our holy Religion requires a Converſation, and that after all is the moſt agreeable, wherein Men may ſhew their Parts as much as they pleaſe, provided they are wiſe to Sobriety, and give way to no ſuch evil Communications, as naturally, tho' perhaps undeſignedly, tend to corrupt *good Manners.*

But ſince 'tis obſerv'd, that generally ſpeaking, tho' the Hearts of Men were ſeldom more corrupt, yet the Ear perhaps never was more chaſte (which by the way, in ſo polite an Age, is rather perhaps owing to a Senſe of Decency, than Religion:) Let us conſider in the next Place, how far Men may derive upon themſelves the Guilt of thoſe Sins, which are occaſion'd,

2. By their *Writings.* The Enemy never ſows his Tares more plentifully, than when he employs thoſe that ſerve under him, in this Method; and perhaps there was never a greater Number of them taken up with this Employment, than at preſent. The World abounds both with heretical and immoral Tracts, which are writ with a profeſs'd View of gaining Proſelytes,

ſelytes. And ſuch Writers it muſt be own'd ſhare directly, and in a very high Degree, in the Guilt of other Men; nay, they are in many Reſpects more Criminal than the Perſons ſeduced and corrupted by them. The plauſible Colours and Shew of Learning or Zeal, which they give their Heterodox Opinions, dazzle and aſtoniſh weak Minds, that are not able to form a true Judgment of Things; and for which Reaſon there may be greater Hopes, that a merciful God will make more favourable Allowances to them. And ſo again, an agreeable Turn of Thought, or Language, or an Appearance of juſt Reaſoning, whereby an immorral Practice is ſometimes recommended and ſet off, may ſeem to extenuate, in ſome Degree at leaſt, the Guilt of ignorant Perſons, who are inſenſibly traduced, and perſuaded to give into it.

How great a Load of Guilt muſt then lie upon thoſe who make it their chief Study and Buſineſs, either to bring in *damnable Hereſies*, or to vitiate Mankind, in what relates to the Duties of Morality and civil Life! An unguarded or *idle* Word, which may give Offence, or be interpreted to favour Corruption in private Company, may perhaps be carry'd no further; but when Men of Learning and Ingenuity; for we do not deny that the moſt dangerous Hereticks and looſe Caſuiſts may have a competent Share of both; when ſuch Men I ſay, publiſh what they write againſt the Truth, and the Doctrine which is according to Godlineſs, the Miſchief is not confin'd to one Church or Nation, but like the flying Roll, which the Prophet explains by a *Curſe going over the Face of the whole Earth*, Zech. 5. 3. it reaches foreign and diſtant Parts; and leſt it ſhould not ſpread faſt and wide enough of it ſelf, Emiſſaries are ſent Abroad, or Journaliſts employ'd to puſh and forward it.

The Caſuiſts therefore have Reaſon to conclude, that an Author who dies impenitent, and there is nothing

thing so difficult as to bring *an Author* to Repentance, shall be responsible for all the dangerous Errors or Sins, his Works may be the Occasion of misleading People into, so long as the World endures, if they have so long, as sometimes probably they may, any ill Consequences.

'Twas the Apprehension of this that gave one of the greatest Wits, but one of the most loose withal, which this Nation has produced, so sensible a Regret upon his Death-bed, and fill'd his Mind with the most terrible Conflicts, and the most difficultly overcome; as we are inform'd by the elegant Author of his Life: And there is no Author, *be he who he will*, whose Conscience exhibits a like Charge against him of corrupting the World, either in Principle or Practice by his Writings, but he will, when he comes to be under the Apprehensions of Death, if he considers what it is to Dye, have the same Sentiments, tho' perhaps without the same Evidences of a sincere Repentance.

But I principally intend here, those loose and ludicrous Writings, whether in Verse or Prose, that are not perhaps directly publish'd to mislead or corrupt Men, but only as Essays of Wit and Humour, or a Satyrical Genius; yet where such Writings will very probably prove the occasional Causes of Error or Offence to others, or where a due regard to Truth and *Decency* is not observ'd in them, this Excuse will by no means do: Nothing can justify an irregular Thought, or what tends to feed Corruption, in any Writer, much less in Persons of a more known and publick, and less still if they be Persons of a *Sacred* Character.

3. We stand chargeable with the Crimes of other Men, when they are occasion'd by our ill Example. So strict are the Rules of our Holy Religion in reference to our external Behaviour, that we are not permitted the most innocent Freedoms, when we may there-

thereby wound the Consciences of our weak Brethren, *or make them to offend*, as the Apostle has particularly determin'd, 1 *Cor.* 8. 11, 12, 13. Tho' the Consequence which some of the Dissenters draw from this State of the Case, is very unjust and fallacious. They pretend that we ought not, supposing them otherways lawful, to make use of the Ceremonies of our Church, which give them so great, and as they imagin, reasonable Cause of Offence. But this cannot be inferr'd from any thing the Apostle has said; he only condemns the Use of Things in their own Nature lawful and innocent, by way of Condescension to the Weakness and Scruples of other Men, when there lies no antecedent Obligation upon us to *use* them, or where they are not impos'd by Authority for the sake of Decency and Order: But where they are, the Question concerning Scandal is out of Doors; for no pretence of avoiding Scandal in Favour of particular Persons, can justify my Disobedience to publick Laws, or my Breach of a *Superior* Engagement. It implies indeed a downright Inconsistency in the Nature of the thing, that I should be under an Obligation to forbear any innocent Rite or Action, in compliance with the Weakness of a few Persons *without*, for they are not all to be consider'd as weak; when at the same time by such a Compliance I am suppos'd to give a general Scandal to the Community I am a Member of.

But why does Authority enjoin such Rites, as are foreseen will give Offence to a great Number of People? We answer, that Authority has from the very End and Reason of its Institution, a Right to prescribe Rules of Order and Decency, and in prescribeing them, is not so much to consult the Weakness or Prejudices of private Persons, as what is generally fitted to attain these Ends. And that the Ceremonies of our Church are very agreeable to them, is not on-

ly said, but has been prov'd a thousand times, to the Conviction, I do not doubt, tho' not the Confutation of our Adversaries.

But because the Objection I am speaking to, is so far improv'd as to be made one of the most popular Pretences for a most dangerous Schism, I shall pursue it, tho' I go a little out of my Way, as far as in my Apprehension it can possibly be carry'd.

'Tis said then further, that admitting Authority is to have Regard to publick Order above the Satisfaction of private Persons; and may therefore lawfully impose such Rites, as they do not approve, they ought not however for that Reason to conform to them. Why so? Because 'tis against their Conscience.

To this 'tis answer'd by a known Rule, That an Erroneous Conscience does not excuse, and in this Case particularly, from Sin: For where there is Authority to command, there is certainly a Right to Obedience; and if so, he that disobeys the Command, withholds that Right, and certainly sins. And no Pretence of Conscience, no Consideration whatever, can justify a sinful Action: My Opinion of Things arising perhaps from Prejudice, or because I have not us'd the proper Means of Information, or from any other Cause, cannot alter the Nature, and intrinsick Obligation of them.

It only remains therefore, that no Power upon Earth has Authority to decree Rites and Ceremonies in the Worship of God. If this were admitted, which at present (against all Reason and Authority of the Church of God, for Fifteen Hundred Years at least) I shall admitt; yet the Dissenters will not be able to justify their Separation merely on account of the Ceremonies of our Church, even upon this Concession. For their very Objecting to us the Ceremonies of our Church, as the Cause of their Separation, supposes they would not otherwise have had Cause to separate from us.

Now

Now I ſay, that where we are under an Obligation to Communicate with an *Eſtabliſh'd* Church; as certainly we are for that very Reaſon, if the Terms of Communion be not ſinful; tho' it were granted, that no Human Power whatever can lawfully ordain Religious Rites, yet this does not render my Conformity to ſuch Rites unlawful. And that for this plain Reaſon; Becauſe an Unlawful Command leaves Things in the ſame State and Condition they were in antecedently to it.

If therefore the Rites of the Church be, as *confeſſedly* they are in themſelves, innocent and lawful, and we might ſafely have us'd them in caſe they had not been commanded; it ſeems to be one of the moſt abſurd Thoughts that ever entred into the Mind of Man, to aſſert they are therefore not lawful, becauſe commanded.

For Inſtance: The Diſſenting Miniſters are generally agreed to diſtinguiſh themſelves by ſomething particular in their Habit. I deſire to know if any Perſon ſhould take upon him to command them ſtill to wear the ſame Habit; would they therefore think themſelves oblig'd to lay it aſide? Why then are innocent Rites to be diſus'd, only becauſe the Supreme Power commands them? No Perſon whatever has more a Right to command what he ought not, than another; and ſo conſequently, can no more alter the Nature of the Thing commanded.

To make what I have ſaid as plain as poſſible. Either our Governours have Authority to enjoyn Rites of Religious Worſhip, or they have not. If they have, 'tis evident from the Reaſon of the Thing, and what has been ſaid, they have a right to our Obedience: And if they have no ſuch Authority, then their Commands are originally *null*, and of no Force, and ſo leave us to our former Freedom and Liberty.

So that the Matter at last will be brought to this Issue: Whether the Use of some Lawful (tho' as they are pretended, little and insignificant) Things, be not rather to be tolerated, than the Breach of Unity and Order, and the ill Consequences of them, both with respect to Religion and Civil Government? Or, in other Words; Whether I can justify my Separating from an *Establish'd Church*, because such Things are commanded by an *Incompetent* Authority, as I suppose in it; which consider'd in themselves, I acknowledge to be no reasonable Cause of Separation?

All therefore we are oblig'd to, and so far we are oblig'd in order to prevent Scandal, is, that we forbear the Use of such Things, wherein we are otherwise perfectly at Liberty to do as we please. Such is the Restraint our Holy Religion puts us under, with respect to Things consider'd in themselves absolutely Lawful: But where, by a Conduct *really* Criminal, or by allowing our selves in any unlawful Practice, we are instrumental in destroying those for whom Christ dy'd, by seducing them by our Example; this must necessarily involve us more deep in the Guilt of such Persons, and inflame the Account we stand charg'd with on their Score, still to a greater Height. I proceed,

Secondly, To shew, in what Respects we may be said more expressly, and with a Real and Form'd Design, to partake of other Men's Crimes. And that is, when either,

1. We consent to any Sinful Action. Or,
2. When we reflect upon it, after 'tis committed, with Complacency.
3. When we advise, or command it.

1. When we consent to any sinful Action. 'Tis a known Rule, *Voluntas est quâ peccatur*; The Guilt of

of Sin lies in this, that 'tis voluntarily committed; and therefore innumerable Actions, materially good and innocent, become sinful, when they are done with an ill or deprav'd Intention. But whether an Action in any Degree sinful, be done by our selves or others, is here a Question of an accidental and foreign Consideration; because the Sin is *prior* to, and (strictly speaking) independent of the Action: For nothing is more evident, than that we may be to all Intents and Purposes guilty of Sin, without actually commmitting it. *The thoughts of Foolishness*, saith *Solomon*, *is Sin.* Prov. 24. 9. Especially such a Thought, as implies a free and full Consent of the Will to Sin, tho' we may be perhaps under Circumstances of Restraint from committing it: So that whether it be committed by our selves, or others, tho' only with our *tacit* Consent, this does not alter the Nature of the Thing. The Will wherein the Crime is *form'd* and seated, is the same, whether we our selves proceed to Action, or not: Much less can the Crime receive any Diminution from what another Person does; tho' it may indeed, when our Consent is signify'd or *express'd*, receive thereby a much higher Aggravation; as in particular, when such a Person is any ways bias'd by our Authority or Superior Condition. For what Superiors are known to approve, and discover their Approbation of, is interpreted by their Inferiors or Dependants, as having in effect, the Force of a Command to them.

'Tis a further Aggravation of an *Express* Consent to any sinful Action, that hereby we strengthen the Cause of Sin in general, and openly give into the Interests of it: And where Men who engage in a Party are sure of one anothers Hearts, they only want a fair and convenient Occasion of joining Hands. 'Tis from their Union in Principles and Inclinations, that they calculate the Strength and Number of those that will stand to them, and by which

they are encourag'd to *declare* themſelves. And there is nothing tends ſo much to promote Sin, or any ſinful Deſign, as the Publick Voice and Approbation.

'Twas this which induc'd *Pilate* to pronounce Sentence on our Saviour, tho' he was convinc'd of his Innocence, and knew that he ought not, according to the Laws, to have condemn'd him. And tho' thro' the Clamour and Inſtigation of the *Jews*, he did condemn him, yet his Death is expreſly in Scripture charg'd upon *them*; and they are ſaid, *by wicked hands to have taken and ſlain him*, Acts 2. 23. and to have been not only his *Betrayers*, but *Murderers*, Chap. 7. 12. tho' the Execution, we know, was perform'd by the *Roman* Soldiers.

2. When we take Complacency in any Sinful Action after 'tis committed, tho' we were no ways concern'd in it. For this, if I may ſo ſpeak, is only a poſtliminous way of Sinning: As to the Quality of the Crime, 'Tis not very material, whether we become Partakers of it by a Prior or an After-Conſent; only there ſeems to be this Difference in the Caſe; That to approve any ſinful Action, when perpetrated by another Perſon, or to diſcover by any Motion of the Will, that in his Caſe we would have done the ſame Thing, argues a greater Corruption of Heart, and that Sin has got a more abſolute Dominion over us. Becauſe we are not under thoſe preſent, or perhaps *violent* Circumſtances of Temptation which he was under, and which Charity will ſuppoſe him to have been under, before he was overcome.

In a word; To ſhew any After-Complacency in the Sins of other Men, is to love Sin out of pure Inclination, and, as the *Platoniſts* tell us, we ought to do Virtue, merely for the ſake of its own Reflection. Upon which Reaſon, probably, the Apoſtle concludes his Catalogue of the moſt horrid Sins Human Nature can be ſuppos'd capable of falling into, in its moſt Cor-

Corrupt State, with that of *taking Pleasure* in the Sins of other Men, *Rom.* 1. 32.

3. When we advise or command any sinful Action. And here again the Degree of Guilt arises in proportion to any Superior Advantages we enjoy over the Person, to whom the Advice or Command is given. Those, for Instance, who have the Reputation of greater Knowledge or Wisdom, or who have more immediately the Direction of other Mens Consciences, if they give them Advice which leads them into Sin, or any Breach of their Duty, are in so much a higher Degree, and more severely answerable for it. Nay, they are in several respects more inexcusable by far, who teach Men so to do, than they who are misled by them: as to Sin against greater Light and Conviction, or any particular Obligation arising from the Nature of our Calling or our Character, is an Argument of a more inflam'd Guilt, than to sin ignorantly, and out of a mistaken Notion of doing what there is no Harm in or out of Deference to the Judgment of those, who are in one Capacity or other above us. For 'tis natural enough for ignorant People to conclude, that their Superiors, who are highly esteem'd for their Wisdom and Knowledge, as generally all Persons in a Superior Condition of Life are by the Vulgar, will not, as they are suppos'd to know better Things, advise them to any thing, but what is lawful and just.

But the Highest Aggravation of our Partaking in the Sins of other Men, is, when we command them upon any thing that is sinful, or make them the Tools and Instruments of Executing our Criminal Projects; wherein, probably, they may be in a great measure passive: But whether they be or no, 'tis the same thing before God, to sin against him in Person, or by Proxy. Only we must observe, that we are so much the more culpable in any unlawful Command,

as it carries a greater Weight and Appearance of Authority along with it.

Thus *David*, by directing the Means of taking off *Uriah*, and commanding him to be executed, is expreſly charg'd by *Nathan* with his Death, and in Terms which import it was his own proper and perſonal Act. *Thou*, ſays the Prophet to him, *art the Man. Thou haſt killed Uriah the Hittite with the Sword* of the Children of *Ammon*, 2 *Sam.* 12. 7, 9. And indeed, as to *Joab*, who had the Charge of ſeeing the Orders of his Prince put in Execution, there are ſome ſpecious Circumſtances in his Favour. He might pretend, That as Captain-General of the Hoſt, he had a Right to command the Officers under him, upon what Service he pleas'd. But tho' it does not appear *Joab* was acted by any private Motives of Envy or Revenge, yet as he knew the particular Intention of *David*, and that the Poſt he commanded *Uriah* to, was not deſign'd for his Honour or the Service of his Prince, but for his Deſtruction; in this, no doubt, *Joab* ſinn'd; tho' there is great Reaſon to believe that *David*, upon many other Accounts, and particularly by the Abuſe of his Superior Authority, *had the greater Sin*; as every Perſon proportionably has, who makes uſe of his Power or Superior Station over other People, to engage them in any Criminal Deſigns, which they would not otherwiſe have been concern'd in.

And thus I have repreſented to you what it is to partake of other Mens Crimes. And tho' I might (perhaps) have deſcended to ſome more particular and remote Inſtances wherein we may be ſaid to do it; yet there are none of them, but what may be eaſily reduc'd to one or more of the foregoing Conſiderations.

And ſo I proceed,

2. *In*

2. *In the Second Place*, To consider the Motives, upon which Men are more usually induc'd to be Partakers of other Mens Sins. And I shall reduce them to these Three Particulars.

1. A False Complaisance.
2. Dependance, and
3. A Sense of Gratitude.

1. We are frequently betray'd into a Criminal Compliance with the Humours or Designs of other Men, out of a false Complaisance. The way to procure the Favour and Esteem of those with whom we converse, is to render our selves easy and agreeable to them. It is not an Opulent Fortune which has of it self a Power to render us so; for Rich Men often put on too haughty and assuming an Air. It is not Wit; for that many times proves satirical and offensive: Neither is it Quality; which may degenerate, and want those Qualifications which are proper to support and adorn it. Nor lastly, is it Piety; for besides that Good Men are not always Persons of the nicest Address, 'tis impossible for them on every Occasion to observe the strict Rules of Piety, without appearing singular or affected. For to be thought of an agreeable and obliging Temper, a Man must not only be content in the Society of Vicious Persons, to hear a great many vain and foolish Things said, but must seem to applaud or assent to them.

Thus the Libertines are represented by the Author of the Book of *Wisdom*, (Chap. 2. 15.) as bringing this Charge of Singularity and Affectation against a Person, who has devoted himself to a more strict and regular Course of Life. *He is*, say they, *grievous unto as even to behold; for his Life is not as other Mens, his Ways are of another Fashion.*

As

As Good Men cannot always ſuit themſelves to the Inclinations of thoſe among whom they converſe, or go along with them in their Deſigns; 'tis a Prejudice too commonly receiv'd againſt Religion it ſelf, that 'tis apt to ingenerate a ſullen and aſſuming Temper; that 'tis fit only for Perſons of low Deſigns, and narrow Souls; or for ſuch as would ſequeſter themſelves from all Commerce with the World.

But there are two Sorts of Libertines, in whom this Prejudice more particularly diſcovers it ſelf; and thoſe are your Perſons of Diſtinction, or of any conſiderable Reputation for Wit. The former are apt to think we want Manners, if we do not readily give into their Sentiments, and approve every thing they ſay or deſign: But for their Inferiors or Dependants to oppoſe (as they ought many times) their Inclinations; why this is provoking beyond all Meaſure, and conſider'd as the moſt rude and unjuſt Uſage in the World.

As moſt Perſons value themſelves upon Quality; for this Reaſon, that it gives them a Right to the Deference and Reſpect of all about them; ſo nothing irritates or provokes *it* more, than when Men ſeem to take too much upon them, or to be wanting in their Regards to it. This ſeeming Indecency, Good Men are oblig'd frequently, if I may uſe an *improper* Expreſſion, to be guilty of; by diſcountenancing, at leaſt by not flattering People of Condition in their Vanities or Vices; the Air of Submiſſion which they obſerve the Body naturally puts on, when it approaches them, ſo ſwells them with Pride, that they uſurp an Authority which is due to God alone; they expect that the Soul alſo ſhould bow and proſtrate it ſelf before them, and that all the Motions of it ſhould wholly tend to them, and be at their Devotion.

If we would not give Offence to your Men of Wit, eſpecially ſuch of them as are of a ſtrong and domineering Imagination, we muſt pay *them* too this

this ſervile Obedience. For Wit, where it is attended with Pride, (from which 'tis rarely ſeparated) thinks every thing its Due, and of all other Qualities, is the moſt impatient of Diſſent or Oppoſition.

Wit is a thing which renders Men acceptable, and recommends them to Favour and Eſteem. Now we are generally more concern'd to maintain a Character which glitters in the Eye of the World, than that which has an intrinſick Merit in it, and tends to the Advancement or Perfection of our Nature. Sin which is the only thing really ſhameful and Contemptible, does not ordinarily occaſion Sinners ſo much Confuſion, or ſo ſenſible a Remorſe, as a very weak or fooliſh Saying, that may expoſe them to Ridicule.

There cannot ordinarily be a greater Affront offer'd to any Man, than to expoſe his Want of good Senſe or Reaſon: But to offer this to a Wit, inflames his Reſentment to the laſt Degree. If we would gain the Favour, or preſerve the Friendſhip of one who pretends very much to this Character, we muſt oppoſe nothing, we muſt be pleas'd, we muſt be convinc'd at every thing he ſays. But ſhall I, out of a ſervile Fear of being accounted a Man's Enemy ſacrifice the Love of Truth? If I can have his Friendſhip upon no other Terms, let him go. The Laws of Charity oblige me, when I hear an innocent Perſon aſpers'd or traduc'd, not to be ſilent. Shall I then tamely hear the Divine Nature and Attributes diſhonour'd, or the Laws of Religion ridicul'd? Or which is ſtill more ſcandalous, ſhall I, out of a falſe Shame, or ſinful Connivance, ſeem to approve or aſſent to ſuch Diſorders? Becauſe, perhaps, my Friend's great Pretence to Wit lies in his being *ſurprizingly* prophane; or in his applying ſome Sacred Paſſage or Saying of Holy Writ to a ridiculous and lewd Purpoſe. A Pretence to Wit ſo low and unworthy,

worthy, that a Wise Man I am sure, would much rather chuse to pass for a Fool in the Opinion of all Men.

Is it then a Crime for a Man to shew his Parts? No; but 'tis a great Abuse of Wit, to employ it to wicked and prophane Ends: 'Tis the most unmannerly Affront to good Men, and of the most dangerous Consequence to weak Minds; who judging of what is said, not by any fix'd or certain Rules of Reasoning, but from the Confidence, the Beauty or Agreeableness of the Expression, are easily vitiated in their Principles, and convinc'd, that the Raillery wherewith they are surpriz'd and pleas'd, is just and fine Reasoning.

Certainly we ought rather study to *avoid* the Conversation, than flatter the Vanity of a vicious Wit, by whom if we have any Concern for the Honour of God, we are in danger of being affronted, or if we want Force and Strength of Mind, of being seduc'd and corrupted.

In both the Respects I have mentioned, and upon all other Occasions wherein out of an Inclination to oblige, we may be more easily induc'd to criminal Compliances; the Apostle's Argument is unanswerable, *If I yet study to please Men, then am I not the Servant of God.*

And yet we do not deny that Complaisance, or an Endeavour to please, is a Virtue; there is nothing more agreeable to the Genius and Design of Christianity, than for Christians to render themselves amiable and engaging to one another. But what then! shall I contribute to feed and flatter those Sinful Passions in my Friend, which hurry him headlong to Destruction? Or shall I countenance him in such Disorders, which when he begins to consider, and reflect upon, he will be asham'd and confounded at himself? Certainly he ought to excuse me from doing him such a *Kindness*.

We

We have the Example of a great Apostle, who became all Things to all Men; but in what respects? In Things of their own Nature Arbitrary and Indifferent. And herein he acted agreeably to the Spirit of our Holy Religion. A Spirit which is pure, peaceable, and easy to be intreated: A Spirit which sweetens the Nature, and corrects the Tempers of Men, and does not discover it self in a peevish or perverse Opposition to the innocent Humours of those, with whom we have to do; but removes all Occasion of Scandal and Offence by a generous and ready Compliance with them.

Yet which of the Apostles discover'd a greater Zeal for Religion, or labour'd *more abundantly* in propagating the Truths of it? Which of them declaim'd with greater Warmth and seeming Asperity of Expression against Vice, or exercis'd a more strict and severe Discipline, than this very Apostle, who both from his own Example and the Genius of our Holy Religion has recommended to us a free, ingenuous and obliging Conversation? These Things are very reconcileable, and the Example he has set us imitable. Christianity does not interfere with any *reasonable* Duty of civil Life, but improves and enobles it.

2. A second Pretence, upon which Men are induc'd to partake of the Crimes of others, is from a Sense of their *Dependance*.

If the Interests of any Person lie, as they sometimes do, in the Hands of wicked Men, there is still greater Difficulty in preserving their Favour or Friendship; he is presently bigotted, capricious or unworthy of their further Notice, if he do not follow them whereso'ever they lead him. He is their *Creature*, they made him, and upon that, they found a Right of absolute Dominion over him.

Those that are in the Dependancies of great Men are better able to judge of what I say; they are under more strong and frequent Temptations to a sinful Obse-

Obſequiouſneſs; Temptations irreſiſtible to thoſe, who have not a true Greatneſs of Mind, ſupported by a true and juſt Senſe of Religion. The Circumſtances of Inferiors and Dependants, who want theſe Qualifications, diſpoſe them to a flexible Temper; which the Vanity of their Superiors is always well pleas'd with.

So hard is it, according to the falſe Judgment of the World, to diſcharge the Duties of human Life with any good Grace, and at the ſame time, to keep ſtrictly to our Chriſtian Character; and the harder ſtill, in the Age we live; eſpecially if what is obſerv'd, and perhaps not without Reaſon, be true, that the moſt polite Times are commonly the moſt corrupt. But I would deſire to know when your Servant, or any other Dependant, burns in the Flames of Hell, for having been neceſſary to your criminal Pleaſures or Deſigns, what will become of the *Chriſtian*. We may ſeparate the Qualities, or relative Obligations of Men, as much as we pleaſe in the Theory here, but there will be then no ſeparating them in *the Subject*. Every Man at the great Day of Retribution, muſt anſwer how far he has obey'd the Laws of his Supreme Lord and Maſter; and of his Superiors in this Life, only in Subordination to *him*.

But Men who are wholly taken up with the Affairs and Intereſts of this Life, do not love to caſt their Views forward upon another; and therefore 'tis almoſt impoſſible, for Perſons of a ſteady and uniform Principle, never to diſpleaſe or offend; if they do not on certain Occaſions vigorouſly, and perhaps without Examination, eſpouſe their Patron's Cauſe, they fall under the heavy Charge of Infidelity, or perhaps of wanting, what I am to obſerve in the next Place, as an Inducement to criminal Engagements.

3. A Senſe of Gratitude. This is the moſt ſpecious and ſtrongeſt Colour of all, to excuſe our giving into the Meaſures of our Friends. We are eaſily carried away

away with those we love, and very much inclin'd to love those, who have done us any great or signal Favours. Ingratitude is so contrary to all the generous Sentiments and Inclinations of human Nature; so complicated an Act of Injustice; so base, mean and dishonourable a thing in it self, and in the Eye of the World, that a Person who can be guilty of it, is supposed, where his Interest, or any other View leads him, to stick at nothing. So that when we call a Man an *Ingrate*, we are interpreted to charge him in Effect, and in one Word, with all the Crimes he is capable of; and as all the common Maxims or Sentiments of Men in the World, are founded on one Reason or other, I take the particular Reason why Ingratitude ordinarily includes in the Idea of it, every thing that is infamous, to be this; That all Sin whatever proceeds from Meanness of Spirit, and want of Respect to the Dignity of Human Nature. Now there is nothing betrays so mean and degenerate, and sordid a Temper as Ingratitude. And therefore 'tis concluded, That a Man, who returns the Favours of his Benefactor, with ill Offices, or perhaps discovers his Secrets, is restrain'd only for want of Opportunity and Temptation from being guilty of all the Vices under Heaven; and the more we consider the Temper of such a Person, the more Reason we shall have or confirm us in this Opinion.

For I think I may appeal to common Observation, whether Pride or Avarice, or perhaps both of them, to say nothing of his other predominate Passions at present, do not ordinarily enter into the Character of the Ungrateful. A proud Man, and there is no Inconsistency in supposing a Person of a mean Spirit to be so, thinks he has a Right to every thing, and that the Favours you conferr'd on him were no more than his Due; he deserv'd them at your Hands; what would you have more? A covetous Man always thinks you are short in your Favours, and measures the Degree

gree of them not by your Capacity, but his own Cravings: And these are two of the head Springs, and most diffusive Sources of all the Sins and Impieties which over-spread the Face of the World.

To avoid therefore such an odious Imputation, and to free our selves from the Pain of disobliging those, who have in some signal Manner oblig'd us, we sometimes run into the other Extream, of a servile Complaisance. We follow our Friends, we engage in their Designs and Interests, without so much perhaps as enquiring into the Reasons of their Conduct, or whither they are going; or if we stay to have Matters a little examin'd, our Partiality is apt to byas our Judgments, and show us the Way we have a Mind to take.

It requires great Strength of Mind to argue against our Inclination in any Case; but where we are acted by the strong and powerful Motives of Gratitude to our Friends, the Endeavour to argue justly and to see Things in a clear Light, is still more painful and difficult. As to the different Judgments we are inclin'd to form of Men and Things, as Passion or Party-Regards differently represent them, every Man may consult himself.

'Tis certain notwithstanding, that the Laws of true Gratitude are always consistent with the Laws of God, and the Obedience we owe to him; and he has an antecedent Right to our Obedience, which no subsequent Obligation can cancel or destroy. So that when there is any seeming Repugnancy betwixt the Respects we owe to our Friends, and our Duty to God, 'tis a clear Case on which Side we are to determine our selves. Whether, says the Apostle, *it be right in the Sight of God to hearken unto Men more than unto God, judge ye.* He appeals to the known Adversaries of the Christian Religion for the Decision of a Question, which will admit of no dispute in any Case, *Acts* 4. 19.

3*dly*,

3*dly*, I proceed in the Third and Laſt Place, to conclude with a practical Improvement or Two from what has been ſaid.

1. If there be ſo many Ways of partaking in other Men's Sins, and we be ſometimes under ſuch ſtrong Temptations to criminal Engagements, as are not eaſily reſiſted, it concerns us to guard with ſo much greater Care and Caution againſt them. Where we are, which is our preſent Caſe, in a State of Warfare, and upon the defenſive, in Proportion to the Number and Strength of the Enemy, we ſhould have a more watchful Eye upon every Motion he makes, and be in a more conſtant Preparation to receive or repel his Attacks. So that the Duties, which naturally ariſe and preſent themſelves to our Thoughts, from the foregoing Diſcourſe, are thoſe ſo frequently recommended to us in the Holy Scriptures, of *Watchfulneſs*, and *walking circumſpectly*. Theſe are proper and neceſſary Preſervatives againſt the Temptations I have been conſidering; let us therefore reſolve to ſecure our Innocence, by a due Regard to them, that ſo we may be ſincere, and *without Offence* till the Day of the Lord; that Great and Awful Day, which God has appointed for the final Judgment of Mankind; and wherein 'tis enough to terrify the beſt of us, to conſider how we ſhall be able to render an Account of *our own Works*, without having any thing to anſwer for thoſe of other Men. But,

2*dly*, Becauſe the greateſt Temptation to a criminal Obſequiouſneſs, ariſes from a Senſe of the Obligations we are under to our Friends, I ſhall more particularly caution you againſt them, by recommending to you in as few Words as poſſible, the two following Conſiderations. And,

1*ſt*. Whenever we are tempted, out of a falſe Shame, or an Apprehenſion of incurring the Diſpleaſure of our Friends, to an ill Thing; let us conſider, that there lies an infinitely Superior Obliga-

tion upon us to obey the Laws of God, and to make it our conſtant Endeavour to pleaſe him. And if it be a ſtrong Senſe of Gratitude, that engages us in any Criminal way of ſerving thoſe that have done us particular Favours, and which an ingenuous Mind ſo difficultly overcomes; let us reflect upon the Obligations ariſing from the infinite Goodneſs and Beneficence of God towards us, from our Creation, Preſervation, and all the Bleſſings of this Life; *but above all, from his ineſtimable Love in the Redemption of the World, by our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

2*dly*, The beſt way of ſhewing our Gratitude to thoſe who have laid any ſignal Engagements upon us, is, to be concern'd for their Improvement in all Worthy and Virtuous Attainments; and where decent and proper Occaſions offer themſelves, to ſhew them their Miſtakes, and to contribute what we can towards rectifying them. Theſe are the beſt and moſt generous Offices we can do for our Friends or Benefactors, and, in the Event, the moſt acceptable and engaging too: He that obſerves theſe Meaſures, and conducts himſelf by the Rules of Prudence, and a juſt Reſpect in them, ſhall afterwards find more Favour, than he that *flattereth with his Tongue*, or whoſe Behaviour is wholly at the Diſcretion of other People.

Integrity, when it is known, ſeldom fails of procuring Men Love and Eſteem; becauſe it is the only Foundation of Truſt and Confidence, and an Argument of an ingenuous Temper of Mind: But ſervile and low Submiſſions, do not ſo often recommend Men to Favour, as expoſe them to Cenſure. Sometimes indeed they are rewarded; becauſe Great Perſons do not always confer their Favours with regard to the Merits of Men, but as they are ſubſervient to their Deſigns; and when their Deſigns are ſerv'd, they cannot but look upon thoſe Perſons, who upon any mean and diſhonourable

Motives

Motives engaged in them, with a ſecret Contempt and Averſion.

Let us never then, to conclude all, out of any Motive whatever, go into the wicked Deſigns of other Men, or contribute, in any of the foremention'd Reſpects, to their Sins. And tho', we grant, there is a more than ordinary Difficulty in oppoſing the Deſigns of thoſe we love, and are careſs'd and belov'd by; yet no Circumſtances of our Friends, no pretence of Kindneſs or Gratitude to them, can authorize an unjuſt or criminal Action. There is a due Subordination of all the Links of Virtue's Chain, which God is at the End of: All the Motions therefore of our Hearts, and all the Actions of our Life, ought to be regulated by his Laws, and referr'd to his Honour and Glory, *Amen.*

SERMON III.

How far the Power of the Civil Magistrate extends, to Punish or Coerce Men of Ill Principles. And of the Duty and Regulation of Fraternal Reproof.

PROV. XIX. 25.

Smite a Scorner, and the Simple will beware; and reprove one that hath Understanding, and he will understand Knowledge.

SOLOMON in these Words prescribes a different Method of proceeding against known Offenders, according to their different Characters. The Scorner, who makes a Jest of every Thing that is Sacred, and professes an open Contempt of Religion, is to be treated with greater Severity, by those who have any direct Authority over him; especially by the Civil Magistrate. For we do not hear that Whipping, as practis'd at this Time in the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, was any Part of Ecclesiastical Discipline in the Days of *Solomon*. 'Tis suppos'd, I say, with much greater Reason, that he who bears the Sword, and is the Minister of God to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil, is the Person to whom the

the Commiſſion is here more immediately given of *ſmiting the Scorner*; leſt by his bold and plauſible way of Raillery, (for the Scorner generally has Wit, or pretends to it) he might poſſibly draw a conſiderable Number of *unthinking* or ignorant Perſons after him. *But ſmite a Scorner, and* the Simple *will beware.*

As to Sinners who have not reſolv'd to ſhut their Eyes againſt the Light of Truth, or who are not loſt to all Senſe of Good and Evil, but are in ſome Diſpoſition at leaſt to be reaſon'd with, and better advis'd; we are directed to apply our ſelves to them in a more Eaſy, Gentle, and Human Method of Reproof: *And* reprove *one that hath Underſtanding, and he will underſtand Knowledge.*

So that in Diſcourſing upon the Words, theſe Two Things ſeem very proper to be conſider'd.

Firſt, The Reaſonableneſs of Employing the Secular Arm againſt the Scorner. And,

Secondly, The Obligations we are in General under, to this Duty of Fraternal Reproof.

Firſt, The Reaſonableneſs of Employing the Secular Arm againſt the Scorner; than which indeed there is no Branch of the Magiſtrate's Authority whatever more clear or evident. *For*, a Senſe of Religion being the great Baſis upon which all Government ſtands; he who openly maintains any Atheiſtical Principles, or makes it his Buſineſs to ridicule the Laws of Religion, and to confound the Diſtinction of Good and Evil, does in Effect, and by neceſſary Conſtruction, declare himſelf an Enemy to the State, and ought therefore to be proceeded againſt as ſuch.

For what is it that gives the Civil Magiſtrate a Right to puniſh Malefactors or Delinquents in any kind? But that Government being the Ordinance of

God, he is invested with a Power from God, to make use of those Means which are necessary to the Support and preservation of it. And for the same Reason, he has not only a just Authority, but a very particular Engagment lying upon him to smite the Scorner. For whereas other obnoxious Persons are charg'd with *Special* Crimes against the State, the Scorner lays his Axe to the very Root of Government, and essays to cut it down, and subvert it entirely. Like the Tyrant, who wish'd the People of *Rome* had but one Neck, that he might destroy them with the greater Ease and Expedition at once.

So that whatever Pretence tender and scrupulous Consciences may have to a Toleration from the State, yet it implies a Contradiction, that the Scorner, who laughs at the very Name and Pretence of Conscience it self, should have any Benefit by such a Toleration. But granting the Scorner has some general and confused Notion of what we call Conscience; and so may think himself oblig'd, with *Vanini*, as far as he is able, to undeceive the World; and set himself to prove upon Principle, that Religion is founded upon no Principles; yet this Zeal, or if you please to call it Conscience, for the Words are equally abus'd to ill Purposes, serves only to render him still more criminal, and obnozious to the State.

In all Cases indeed, how far Men, upon a pretence of Conscience may be tolerated in a false Doctrine or Worship, is not so much a consideration of Charity, or, to speak the common Dialect, of Moderation, as of Wisdom and Prudence. The Magistrate is to preserve the Peace and Tranquility of the State. If this cannot be done, without putting Persons, who, upon good Grounds, are thought dangerous to the State, under certain wholsome and convenient Restraints; the Magistrate is oblig'd, from the very Nature and End of his Office, to lay such Restraints upon them: Because his principal Care, (and

(and to which all private Regards must give place) is, that the Commonwealth may receive no harm. He ought however to deal impartially with himself in the Case, and not to make use of any colours or specious Pretences of publick Good, to authorize Violence and Oppression; but proceed with great Caution and Tenderness, and never disturb any Person in his Civil Rights or Liberties, where there are not very reasonable and strong Presumptions, that either in themselves, or their natural and ordinary Consequences, they tend to the Disturbance of the State.

I add, in their natural and ordinary Consequences: For the Magistrate is not only to suppress present and open Disorders, but to provide against probable and imminent Dangers.

'Twill be said perhaps, That what is here asserted, is very just with respect to those that own a foreign Right, and only wait an Opportunity of declaring for it: But as to peaceable and *loving* Subjects, who desire to pay their Taxes and live quietly, what great Harm or Danger can be apprehended from them? Would it not be very hard and unjust, that they should suffer upon the Account of mere Consequences, which are charg'd upon their Principles, and which they disown? To this I answer, That whatever good Names Men may give themselves, or their Friends, this does not alter the Nature of Things or *Facts:* The worse Designs People have, the more they are concern'd to dissemble them. And tho' perhaps the Consequences we charge upon the Principles or Party-Zeal of Men, may not *necessarily* flow from them; yet if they be such, as from the natural Tendency of Things, *may* very probably flow from them, then the Magistrate has good and sufficient Cause to interpose his Authority, in order to prevent any ill Effects of them.

As for Instance. When those Principles, which naturally lead to subvert all Order and Government

in the State, are openly advanc'd and juſtify'd; or when the Meaſures formerly taken in Purſuance of ſuch Principles, and which actually involv'd the State in the utmoſt Confuſion and Diſorder, are not only excus'd, but publickly juſtify'd, not here and there, by ſome known and popular Advocate of the Cauſe, but by a numerous Party; and when their very Number is made uſe of, as an Argument to render them more *formidable* to the State: In this Caſe, however the Magiſtrate may be inclin'd to Acts of Goodneſs and Mercy; yet if he be a wiſe, or rather, if he be not a very weak Governor, he will think himſelf oblig'd to guard, with all proper and convenient Laws, againſt the Deſigns or Attempts of ſuch Men: And if he do not find it neceſſary, as he ought not, where the Neceſſity is not very viſible and apparent, to *ſmite* them; yet it muſt be granted the moſt reaſonable Thing in the World, that they ſhould be ty'd ſo far up, as never to have the ſame, or the like Occaſion again of *Smiting* him.

What therefore the Magiſtrate has to do, is to judge (and to judge as he will anſwer it to God and his own Conſcience) whether the Umbrage that any Body or Society of Men, under a Pretence of Liberty of Conſcience, may give the State, be really ſuch as endangers it: And he is to proceed with the greater Indulgence, or Severity, accordingly.

'Tis allow'd, I think, on all Hands, that a Prince where there are ſtrong and violent Preſumptions, that a Neighbouring State is forming any Deſigns to his Prejudice, or which may be improv'd ſo as ſenſibly to weaken him, and deſtroy the Balance of Power, tho' without any direct Intention of making War upon him; 'tis allow'd, I ſay, and particularly by *Grotius*, that a Prince, if he cannot otherwiſe have Satisfaction, may have Recourſe to the Sword, for the Good and Safety of his People. And 'tis upon this Principle, that *Cambden*, in more Places than one

one obſerves, That Queen *Elizabeth* was induced to aſſiſt the *Netherlanders*. And I humbly take it, 'tis impoſſible to juſtify ſeveral Wars ſince that Time, which Proteſtant States have been engag'd in, upon any other Principle, eſpecially in all the Quarters they have been carry'd into.

Now if the Magiſtrate, in order to prevent any ill Deſigns, tho' of a Potentate in Alliance with him, may, ſo far as he is able, and appears neceſſary to this End, coerce ſuch an Ally; ſhall we debar him from making uſe of the ſame Precautions, under a like viſible Apprehenſion of Danger or Diſturbance from his own Subjects? For what Reaſon?

What I have ſaid, concludes for the coercive Power of the Civil Magiſtrate in any Caſe, and over all Perſons, where they give him juſt Umbrage; but it concludes moſt evidently for his Authority to *ſmite* the Scorner, whoſe Principles have a direct Tendence to overthrow all the Motives to *Civil* Obedience, and indeed by caſting off all the Reſtraints of Religion, to convert the whole Race of Mankind into one great Commonwealth of *Cannabals*.

I would not be thought by any thing that has been ſaid, to favour Perſecution, no not towards the Scorner himſelf; whether he pretends to act upon a Principle of Conſcience, or the no leſs equivocal Name of Honour; provided the State apprehend no Inconvenience from his Impunity, or from any Indulgence it may think fit to grant him; or in caſe it be not found neceſſary to inflict ſome Exemplary Puniſhment upon him, *that the ſimple may beware*, and his Deſigns to pervert or corrupt them, be fruſtrated.

I only intend, that in reference to all Perſons whatever, which threaten the State with any apparent Danger or Innovation, we are not ſo much to conſider, what a Good and Merciful Prince *may* be

be inclined to do, as what a wise and just Prince in order to the publick Peace and Safety, *ought* to do.

I proceed to my next Particular;

Secondly, To consider the Obligations we are under in general to the Duty of Fraternal Reproof; which I shall reduce to these Two Heads.

1. Of a just Concern for the Honour and Interests of Religion. And,
2. Of the Charity we owe to our Neighbour.

1. A just Concern for the Honour and Interests of Religion, obliges to this Duty. In which Proposition there are these Two Things imply'd; That the Sins and Impieties of Men bring a Scandal and Discredit on Religion: And that to admonish and reprove them for such Sins and Impieties, is a proper Means to prevent that Scandal, and promote the Interests of Religion.

1. That the Sins and Impieties of Men, bring Scandal and Discredit upon Religion. The Laws indeed of Religion (I speak in reference to the Moral Duties of it) are always the same, and of standing and perpetual Obligation; and therefore are at all times equally to be regarded, and *had in Honour*. Order being founded in the eternal Reason of Things, and the Perfection of the Divine Nature, is immutable; and so consider'd abstractedly, and in it self, Religion can suffer no Scandal or Dishonour: But in the Opinion of Men, who judge of Things not from their intrinsick Worth or Excellency, but from the Effects they *accidentally* produce, the Credit of Religion may be, and, God knows, is too often lessen'd and impair'd.

As some Callings and Professions lie under a more General Odium and Disrepute than others, not that

that they are really Criminal in themſelves, but by reaſon of the common Abuſes and Diſorders, which are obſerv'd to be crept into them, ſo the Vices of Chriſtians are imputed, by Men who judge of Things only by the Event, and according to Appearance, to ſomething wrong or defective in Chriſtianity it ſelf.

For 'tis natural enough for Men, who content themſelves with ſlight and ſuperficial Obſervations, without going to the Bottom of Things, or examining their true Cauſes; 'tis natural enough, I ſay, for ſuch Men to ſuſpect, that a Religion which fails ſo much, and in ſo many Inſtances, of the End it deſigns and propoſes, has not really that Efficacy and Power in order to reform the World, which we would attribute to it. If it have, ſay they, Why is *not* the Effect more proportion'd to the Cauſe? Why are the Lives of Chriſtians generally ſo repugnant to the Laws of Chriſtianity, notwithſtanding the Aſſiſtances it is preſum'd to afford? And tho' in Reply to this, 'tis ſaid, that the beſt Inſtitutions and Deſigns in the World, in order to the Reformation of Mankind, may by an ill Uſe of their Liberty be render'd ineffectual, and that the Grace of God does not deſtroy the natural Freedom of their Faculties; yet it would certainly be more for the Honour of our Holy Religion, notwithſtanding we are able to give a ſatisfactory Anſwer to this Objection, that there were no occaſion at all for anſwering it. Which leads me to obſerve,

2*dly*, That to admoniſh and reprove Men for their Sins and Impieties, is a proper Means not only to prevent any ſuch Scandal, but to promote the Intereſts of Religion in general.

1. This is one of the Methods which the Wiſdom of God himſelf has appointed in order to reclaim Sinners from the Evil of their Ways. That Command by *Moſes* to this End, *Lev* 19. 17. is very full and expreſs, *Thou ſhalt in any wiſe rebuke thy Neighbour, and not*

not suffer Sin upon him. As if these were only two different Expressions for the same Thing, and to omit reproving a Sinner, were virtually and in Effect granting him a License and Permission to Sin. The Words of the Apostle seem to be of the same Import, when he charges us, *That we should have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them,* Ephes. 5. 11. Agreeable to which is the Rule he lays down, *Heb.* 3. 13. *That we should exhort one another daily, lest any of us should be harden'd through the Deceitfulness of Sin.*

All which Places express to us the natural Efficacy, which a just and seasonable Reproof has, to bring a Sinner to a Sense of his Sins, and to check him from going on impenitently in them. For indeed Sin is of so delusory and flattering a Nature, that it not only corrupts the Heart, but blinds the Eyes of Men, that they do not, or will not see their own Actions in a just Light. As our Blessed Saviour himself has observed, *John* 3. 20. *For every one that doth Evil hateth the Light, neither cometh to the Light, lest his Deeds should be reprov'd.* 'Tis certain when we indulge our selves in any Sin, especially the Sin that more easily besets us, as it always speaks favourably for it self, so we are much inclin'd to give it a favourable Hearing; we suppose that 'tis not in it self of so provoking and dangerous a Nature, as 'tis commonly represented: Or if we cannot get over this Difficulty, then we imagine our selves under some very particular Circumstances of Temptation, which will in a Degree at least excuse such a Sin; or if this gives us no Satisfaction, we will be careful however to manage Things so wisely as to give no publick Occasion of Scandal; or perhaps, to conclude all, the Liberty we give our selves is no more, than what seems to be authoriz'd by publick Example, and what in common Repute has no shocking Idea of Infamy or Disgrace annex'd to it.

These

These are the false and delusive Colours, wherewith our sinful Passions *betray the Succours* which Reason *offers*. We must therefore call in some foreign Aid, and find, if we can, some friendly and charitable Hand to point out our Mistakes to us, and set us right; and there will be no great Difficulty in convincing us, if we be in any tolerable Disposition to be convinc'd, that all these, or whatever other specious Excuses we can frame to favour our Disorders, have nothing in them.

'Tis highly probable that *David*, in his Affair with *Bathsheba*, suffer'd his Passion to get the Ascendant o're his Reason and Piety, upon some such false and flattering Insinuations. And he appears to have been so far seiz'd with the agreeable Delusion he was under, that for some Time he discover'd no sensible Uneasiness, or Remorse for the Sin of his Inclination; but sought rather to favour his continuing in it, by imbruing his Hands in the Blood of an Innocent Person: As 'tis natural for all Sinners, when once the Grace of God leaves them to themselves, to take Refuge in one Sin, and perhaps a much greater Sin, in order to cover or excuse another.

But when this Pious and Excellent Prince, for so he was by the Testimony of the Spirit of God in all other Respects, was come to himself, and made sensible that He was the *Man* that had committed those grievous Crimes, which through the Violence and Disorder of his Passion, and as we may conclude from the manner of the Prophet's reproving him, he seems not to have been sensible of before; then he felt in his Mind that bitter Anguish and Remorse, wherewith true and awaken'd Penitents look back on their past Sins, when the flattering Disguise wherein they made their first Approach is taken off, and they view them in their proper and genuine Deformity.

Yet

Yet a juſt Reproof is not only proper to diſcover to us, what the Deceitfulneſs of Sin renders us backward and averſe to enquire narrowly into our ſelves, and to make us aſham'd and penitent for it, but has frequently this further good Effect, that it diſpoſes us to contrary Acts of Piety and Religion. For there being no Medium between Virtue and Vice, our forſaking of Sin is the firſt Step towards our Proficiency in Virtue: The Foundation of a religious Life, and which naturally riſes upon it, *is Repentance from dead Works.* So that as they who would learn the modern Philoſophy, are adviſed to diveſt themſelves, as much as poſſible, of all former Notions and Prejudices; he that would be inſtructed in the Art of Holy Living, muſt by way of a previous and neceſſary Qualification, entirely forſake and renounce his Sins. And 'tis this good Effect of fraternal Reproof, in the future Reformation of a Sinner, which *Solomon* more particularly deſigns in theſe Words; *And reprove a Man of Underſtanding, and he will underſtand Knowledge:* That is, he will not only take to himſelf Shame and Repentance for his former Follies, but in Conſequence of his Shame and Repentance, will become more ſenſible of the Reaſonableneſs and Excellency of Religion, and of the Power which it ought to have over him.

Thus *David* after he had been brought by the Method I am conſidering, to a juſt Senſe and Humiliation for his *great Offence*, having deſir'd of God that he would *hide his Face from his Sins, and blot out his Iniquities*; immediately adds in a noble and moving Strain of Devotion, *Create in me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me*, Pſ. 51.9,10. Nay, he is ſo ſenſible of the Efficacy of Fraternal Reproof well apply'd, and which had ſo good an Effect upon himſelf, that he reſolves by the Grace of God, not only upon his own future Reformation, but to engage in the Deſign of Reforming others; *Then will I teach Tranſ-*

Transgressors thy Ways, and Sinners shall be converted unto thee, Ver. 13.

Even those who in a good Measure *understand Knowledge*, and desire to live up to what they know, yet are affected with a more lively and powerful Sense of their Duty, by being reminded of it. How justly apprehensive St. *Peter* was of this, appears from his following Resolution, *Therefore I will not be negligent to put you in Remembrance of these Things, though ye know them, and be established in the Truth; yea, I think it meet as long as I am in this Tabernacle to stir you up, by putting you in Remembrance.* A Remembrancer is useful to the wisest and best, and most circumspect of us; for supposing the Understanding rightly inform'd, and no ways influenc'd by the Motives and Maxims of Self-love, in the Judgment it makes of our Actions, yet we are strangely apt to forget the Religious Truths we hear, and especially such of them, as are most opposite to prevailing Temper and Inclination; and therefore have need of some friendly impartial Monitor, frequently to refresh our Memory and *provoke* us to good Works; which is the Reason of that other Apostolical Exhortation, *Col.* 3. 16. *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all Wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.*

2. As the Wisdom of God has directed this Method, Societies have been form'd by Men to concert how it may be most effectually pursued. If these Societies have not had all the Effect that might have been expected from them, as 'tis to be fear'd they have not, this is to be ascrib'd to some *accidental* Defect or Misconduct in them; as Persons of more Zeal perhaps than Knowledge, have with much Heat for a time endeavour'd to promote the Design of them; but after they had spent their first Fire, and met with greater Difficulties than they expected, have grown very cold and remiss. Or in other Respects perhaps they have been Men of no great Consideration, and there-

therefore very unfit for the Discharge of a Duty which of all others requires the greatest Nicety and *Address*. The propagating of Religion, especially in the Way I am mentioning, is a very grave and serious Business, which none ought to undertake but Persons distinguish'd by some eminent Qualities. When therefore ordinary and illiterate, tho' perhaps well-meaning *Mechanicks*, engage in a Work, which the wisest Heads often find themselves at a loss to discharge with a becoming Decency; this instead of maintaining the Honour and Dignity of Religion, is rather apt to expose it to Contempt and Dishonour. But how far such Societies have been defective in their Conduct, will more particularly appear, when I come to consider the proper Regulations of this Duty. In order to which I am to shew by the way, how far we are oblig'd to it,

2. From the Charity we owe to our Neighbour. Charity in the highest, and certainly in the noblest Instance of it, as it tends to promote the true and supreme Interest of Man, the Happiness of his Soul to all Eternity. Many excellent Things are spoken of this Duty, as it respects the temporal Advantage of other Men, and disposes us to procure for them the Comforts and Conveniences of a Life which is of a very uncertain, and at the best but of a short Continuance. And yet our charitable Offices in contributing to the Relief of other Persons under Circumstances of Distress, have a great many Promises made to them, both of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come; they are said to be Sacrifices wherewith God is well pleased, *Heb.* 13. 16. They procure Men Deliverance out of many Temporal Afflictions, or the proper Supports and Consolations under them, *Ps.* 41. 1. God is pleased in Consideration of them, to make and acknowledge himself a Debtor to Men in this World, *Prov.* 19. 17. But the Son of God goes yet higher, and in the Day when he

he will judge all Mankind to an unspeakable State of Happiness or Misery, in a World which shall never have an End, will take the Good we have done to our indigent Brethren as done to himself, *Mat.* 25. 34. And therefore 'tis upon this persuasive Argument, that the Works of Charity lay up in Store a good Foundation for Men against the time to come, that we are directed by the Apostle in a more authoritative and powerful Manner, to charge those which are rich in this World, that they be willing to give, glad to distribute, 1 *Tim.* 6. 17. The Time would fail me to enumerate all the particular Expressions, and publick Testimonies of God's Favour, to the truly charitable Christian.

And if the Duties of Charity, with respect to a Society, we form here upon Earth, a Society only in Comparison for a few Moments, which is dissolv'd with our Lives, and is chiefly maintain'd by a Communion of fading and transitory Goods; if the Duties of Charity, I say upon this Consideration be so binding and indispensible, that they are made the great Test whereby we are to prove our selves the true Disciples of Christ; and that the Trial of our Obedience at the last Day particularly proceeds upon them, how much more careful ought we to be in discharging the Duties incumbent on us, with Regard to that Spiritual Society we are enter'd into under Christ our Head; which is begun indeed here upon Earth, but is indissoluble and *eternal in the Heavens?* A Society which is design'd to advance the Perfection of our noblest and immortal Part, in the Vision and Enjoyment of God; in the intimate Communion we shall have with the Son of God, with the Holy Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect: And in the Fruition of those great and glorious Rewards of Eternity, which we shall enjoy in common, and without Division.

The Advantages and Enjoyments of this World are such that they cannot be communicated without being divided; and for this Reason, we are not always able to contribute to the Relief of those who may stand in need of our Assistance: Nay, in some Cases, we are oblig'd to withhold the External Acts of our Benevolence, from those who (we are morally assur'd) will make an ill Use of them. But here the Presumptions ought to be very strong, and not grounded upon Surmises of Prejudice or villanous Imputations. A Father, that out of a Criminal Indulgence to his Son, furnishes him with Supplies to support his Extravagancies, and thereby corrupts his Soul, is in truth more criminal with all his seeming Tenderness, than those who sacrific'd the Lives of their Innocent Children to Devils. And tho' our Holy Religion, and indeed the common Obligations of Humanity require, that we should do good to our greatest Enemies; that we should relieve them in their Necessities; that we should give them Bread to eat, and Water to drink; yet I do not know that we are oblig'd to put an Enemy, or even a Friend, in a Capacity of doing any Thing, which we have strong and reasonable Grounds to believe, will turn to our own or his greater Disadvantage, than the Kindness we do him will compensate for.

But we can be under no Circumstances, which will excuse us from procuring for other Persons, so far as we are able, the true and Spiritual Goods, tho' they be our greatest Enemies; tho' they be such as have done, or perhaps continue to do us very Ill Offices. Your Enemy thirsts after your Estate, or perhaps your Life, or (what you are still less able to bear) he strikes at your Good Name; but yet he is a visible Member of Christ's Church; he is one of those for whom Christ, who tasted Death for every Man, shed his most precious Blood; one therefore, that God willeth should repent and be saved; and

you

you ought to be ſubſervient, and promote to the utmoſt of your Power the Deſigns of God. Your Enemy, by your Chriſtian Offices, in Concurrence with God's Grace, may be brought to Repentance, and have his Name written in the Book of Life.

In Affairs relating to this Life, our private Paſſions and Intereſts are to give way to the Good of the Publick; and ſhall we not ſacrifice them to the Will and Pleaſure of God, in Carrying on his Great and Glorious Deſigns, and to which all his other Deſigns are ſubordinate, of Building up the Church, and procuring the Salvation of all Men?

Let us then labour in this Heavenly and Bleſſed Work which proceedeth from Love, in the more generous and better Part of it: Let us uſe our beſt Endeavours, and particularly in the Method I am recommending, to reclaim Sinners from the Errors of their Ways, and bring them to Repentance, that they may lay hold of Eternal Life. 'Tis the Command of God by *Moſes*, Exod. 23. 4. *If thou meet thine Enemy's Ox or Aſs going aſtray, thou ſhalt ſurely bring it back to him again.* By which, I ſuppoſe, is meant, that thou ſhalt uſe ſome proper Means to prevent the Loſs of it. And ſhall I then unconcernedly ſee him (tho' mine Enemy) periſh, *for whom Chriſt dy'd*; and uſe no proper Endeavour to ſave that Precious and Immortal Soul, which it coſt ſo much to redeem?

To conclude this Head: 'Tis to a Good Man one of the greateſt Pleaſures of this Life to do good, even in Relieving the Temporal Wants, or Encouraging the Endeavours of Indigent and Diſtreſs'd Perſons. To a Wiſe Man, I am ſure, this is the Chief, I had almoſt ſaid the Only End, for which (conſidering the Temptations of it) a High Poſt and Fortune in the World ought to be deſir'd. But now, if the Pleaſure and Satisfaction of doing good, ariſe, as 'tis reaſonable they ſhould in Proportion to the Quality or Degree of the Goood we do; what an un-

ſpeakable Joy will ſpring up in the Mind of a Good Man, who has been inſtrumental in bringing a Loſt Sheep into the Fold, under Jeſus Chriſt, the Great Biſhop and Shepherd of the Flock; or, to uſe the Words of the Apoſtle St. *James*, *in Converting a Sinner from the Evil of his Ways, and Saving a Soul from Death?*

Among other Means to this End, we have obſerv'd that the Wiſdom of God has appointed the Duty of Fraternal Reproof, that in the Natural Tendency of the Thing, and in the Judgment and Experience of Men, 'tis found very proper to this End; and that Charity obliges us to the Exerciſe of it. But yet I would not be underſtood, as if we were oblig'd to exerciſe it at all Adventures, or indeed on any Occaſion, but where it may be perform'd after a proper and becoming Manner. For it being a Duty of Chriſtian Prudence, and deriving its Obligation from the Propriety it has to effect the End propos'd by it; where the End of it in all Probability cannot be effected, the Obligation ceaſes. According to that Rule of *Aquinas*, *Ea quæ ſunt ad Finem, debent regulari ſecundum quod exigit Ratio Finis.* And therefore *Solomon* has expreſly determin'd, that where there is no Likelihood that our Reproofs will make any good Impreſſion, but rather perhaps be to our Diſadvantage, without any Benefit to the Party reprov'd, there we are to forbear them. *Reprove not* ſays he, *a Scorner, leſt he hate thee.* Prov. 9. 8. But the Reaſon of the Prohibition holds with reſpect to all other Perſons, where no probable Good is to be expected from our Reproofs, but rather ſome Conſequence injurious to our ſelves, or the Honour of God. And indeed, this is no more than what *Solomon* ſeems to inſinuate in the Words of my Text, by delivering the Scorner into the Hands of the Civil Magiſtrate, to be dealt with as he deſerves, in a more proper and effectual manner.

But

But because in many Cases we cannot be dispens'd with from Discharging this Duty, and yet the Discharge of it is commonly attended with some Difficulty; give me Leave, before I proceed to a Conclusion, to lay down some proper Regulations of it, on such Occasions, wherein we are under an indispensible Obligation to it. And,

1. Great Tenderness and Compassion must be us'd, to give our Reproofs the greater Force and Efficacy. We must make those we admonish sensible that we have a hearty and real Concern for their Good and Welfare; and that this is the principal Motive, upon which we take upon us so ungrateful an Office. 'Twas with this Temper the Apostle proceeded in his Reproving certain Disorders among the *Corinthians:* He tells them, *that with much Affliction and Anguish of Heart, he wrote unto them with many Tears; not that they should be* grieved, *but that they should know the Love he had more abundantly to them.* 2 Cor. 2. 4. And he prescribes the same Temper and Lenity to others, which he was so eminent an Instance of himself: *If any Man be overtaken in a Fault, ye which are Spiritual, restore such a one in the Spirit of Meekness.* But besides the Natural Propriety of this Method to produce the design'd Effect, (for we never have a readier Access to the Hearts of Men, than when they perceive we have a real Concern for their Interests); the Apostle adds a very persuasive and particular Argument, to enforce his Advice. He reccommends it to the Person *reproving*, to consider himself, lest he also be tempted. And indeed, the more we retire into our selves, and examine our own Qualifications or Conduct, the more candid and modest we shall be in the Judgment we make of other Men.

We shall find by this Method, that many of our Good Actions in the Eye of the World, are little better, perhaps than more specious and plausible

Sins, without any Regard to the true and genuine Motives of Piety and Religion.

But when we judge of the Conduct of other Men, we are oblig'd by all the Rules of Christian Charity and common Ingenuity, to believe the Good they do, where nothing appears to the contrary, to be done upon Good Motives, and for truly Religious and Good Ends.

The Reason is the same with respect to the Judgments we form of our own, or the Vices of other Men. We are conscious to our selves how easily we are betray'd into Sin; how deliberately, and with how many other Circumstances of Aggravation we commit it. But that Charity which hopeth and believeth all Things, will, though I know the Practice of the World is the very Reverse of this, impute the Sins of other Persons to such Considerations, as rather lessen than aggravate them: The Person you are going to reprove has committed some scandalous Crime, but he was perhaps in great Measure surpriz'd into it, or he did it through Ignorance, and not any malicious Intention; or he was under some very pressing and dangerous Circumstances of Temptation: These are the Alleviations which a Person of Candor will frame in excuse of the Sins or Escapes of other Men: But how far they are applicable to himself, he is to judge, not by the Rules of Charity, but by Evidence, and the Report of his own Conscience.

Observe to this Purpose the great Decency and ingenuous Temper of the Apostle, in speaking of other Men's Sins; *If any Man be overtaken with a Fault*; by which the Apostle insinuates, that we ought to consider a laps'd Brother, as *rather* Passive in what he has done, as rather flying from and caught by Temptation, than advancing to meet it.

I do not say, these alleviating Circumstances of the Sins of other Men, which Charity ought in most Cases

Cases to suppose, will excuse them; but when we consider how apt we also are our selves to be tempted, and how often we have been actually tempted to commit Sin; this is certainly a very good Reason, why we should animadvert on the Faults of other Men with great Tenderness and more Grains of Allowance.

And yet I grant in some Cases we ought, when we take a Sinner to task, to rise in our Resentments, where the Character of the Person, or the Nature and Quality of his Crimes will not admit of these mitigating Considerations. Some according to the Apostle's Advice, *Tit.* 2. 13. are to be *rebuk'd sharply*, ἀποτόμως. A Metaphor taken from the Art of a Surgeon, who as the Wound is more dangerous or corrupt, makes the deeper Incision. Accordingly both the Prophets under the Law, and St. *Paul* in his Epistles, according to the Notoriety of the Crimes they reprov'd, and degree of Scandal *arising* from them, us'd a greater Asperity of Expression; even the Holy Jesus himself, in reproving the notorious Hypocrisy of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, was sometimes transported beyond the common and ordinary Appearances of his Temper.

2. Our Reproofs must be modest, and free from all hypocritical Ostentations; for we are to consider, that 'tis not so much the Reprooof it self, as the Reasonableness and Pertinency of it, which give it a just Force: But from a hypocritical Pretender to Religion, the Edge of the Reproof is, for Want of these Qualifications in the Reprover, very much turn'd; the Reproof you will say, as to the Matter of it, is the same, tho' given by the most vitious Person, who notwithstanding his other Vices, may sometimes be mov'd by a particular Effort of Zeal to animadvert upon the Faults of other Men, especially such Faults, as he is under no Temptation to, from natural Temper, or the Circumstances he is in. This 'tis granted,

is agreeable enough to the Character of a Zealot; and we allow further, that Truth ought to be hearkned to, whoever ſpeaks it: But 'tis a ſtrong Prejudice againſt the Perſon that ſpeaks it, if he diſcover by his own Conduct, that he has no regard to it. In this Caſe, tho' 'tis true, the Reaſon of the Thing conſider'd in it ſelf is the ſame, yet the Force and Authority of it is conſiderably abated. *Phyſician heal thy ſelf*, is a natural and obvious Reply to ſuch a Reprover.

3. Avoid expoſing the Offender, as much as the Rule of Charity will admit: This is an Argument that our Admonitions proceed from Friendſhip, and that 'tis not our Deſign to diſgrace but reform; theſe are the faithful Wounds, which a Friend will inflict, without betraying the Perſon admoniſhed to publick Scandal: The Rule our Saviour gives, that if our *Brother treſpaſs againſt us, we ſhould tell him privately of his Faults*, is to be obſerv'd with Reſpect to all other Crimes that we are not under an Obligation to diſcover out of Regard to the Intereſts of the State, or the Juſtice we owe to private Perſons, or where the Honour of Religion is not highly and nearly concern'd.

But to keep our ſelves in all Caſes from Suſpicion of deſigning any thing againſt the Reputation of thoſe we reprove, Prudence requires we ſhould ſhew them their Faults without attacking their Perſons; becauſe there is nothing imbitters the Spirits of Men more, or renders them ſo incapable of wiſe Counſel, as when they ſuppoſe themſelves reflected upon, and ill us'd. As the true Art of Praiſe, no leſs than of Panegyric, conſiſts in ſaying Things *indirectly*, the leſs we appear at firſt View to deſign either to praiſe or reprove, the more agreeably we ſurprize and awaken the Attention; ſo that generally the neareſt Way to bring our Reproofs home to the Conſcience of a Sinner, is to go about.

This was the Way *Nathan* took in his Reproof of *David*: He comes before him with a feign'd Caſe, under

der a ſpacious Pretence of ſuing for Juſtice. This Caſe was at the bottom *David*'s own. And the Effect of it was, that he inſenſibly pronounced Sentence againſt himſelf, and was brought thereby to a more pungent and awaking Senſe of his Crime, than if he had been told of it in plain and direct Terms. But this leads me to conſider,

4. A fourth Regulation of this Duty, with reſpect to the Quality of the Perſon reprov'd. As People never think themſelves more injur'd by us, than when we fail in the Reſpect due to any particular Character they are inveſted with, we muſt never think of gaining their Attention, where we ſeem in the leaſt wanting in our Regards to them; for this Reaſon we ought, as little as poſſible, to give our Admonitions to our Superiors the Air of Reproof. In this Caſe the very Name of it, as it imports ſomething of Authority, ſounds a little harſh and aſſuming. The Apoſtle therefore ſeems to ſoften and expreſs it by a Term, which gives the Mind a more eaſy and agreeable Idea, *Rebuke not*, ſays he, *an Elder*, but *intreat him as a Father*. The ſame Decency is to be obſerv'd with reſpect to Perſons of any Eminence above us in *any* Character; ſo that if it be neceſſary, as upon ſome Occaſions it may, to lay the Faults of ſuch Perſons before them, we are to do it at once in the moſt diſtant and the moſt reſpectful Manner. This is what *Elihu* inſinuates in thoſe Words, *Job* the 34th. v. 18. *Is it fit to ſay to a King, Thou art Wicked, and to Princes, Ye are Ungodly?* He does not intend, that the greateſt Perſonages are wholly exempt from Reproof, eſpecially by thoſe who are in their Confidence, or miniſter to them in Things ſacred; he only deſigns, that we ſhould ſhew them their Faults as decently and in as remote and in offenſive Language, as the Nature of them will bear.

5. I ſhall juſt mention one other Qualification of a juſt Reproof, and that is the Seaſonableneſs of it. In all the

the Addreſſes we make to other Perſons, the well-timing of them is of ſingular Advantage. An open Rebuke is apt to irritate thoſe, who have the greateſt Command of their Temper, eſpecially where they ſuſpect any Perſon before whom they are rebuk'd, for their Enemy, or when they are under any Diſorder of Mind, or in the Heat of their Paſſion. On ſuch Occaſions a Reproof will neither be well receiv'd, nor find Room for Admittance; we muſt therefore in this Caſe, as in moſt others, when we would engage any Perſon, obſerve the Diſpoſition he is in, and whether he be acceſſible. A due Regard is to be had to the *mollia tempora Fandi*, the eaſy and favourable Moments of attending the Great, eſpecially in all our Applications to them; but never more than when we come before them in Quality of *Monitors*. An Office ſeldom very acceptable at the beſt, except to ſuch Perſons as have the leaſt Need of it. And probably 'tis for Want of this Qualification among others, that ſome of our Societies for Reformation of Manners have made no greater Progreſs; that a due Regard is not always obſerv'd in them to Times and Perſons. *A Word ſpoken in Seaſon how good is it?* But when a Reproof is abruptly introduced by thoſe, who have more Zeal than perhaps either Diſcretion or Manner, how inſignificant, not to ſay what the Authority of *Solomon* would juſtify, how fooliſh is it? *For a Fool*, as he obſerves, *will always be talking, but a Wiſe Man will keep a Word for afterwards*, Wiſd. 29. 11.

Thus I have conſidered ſome of the chief Qualifications of this Duty of fraternal Reproof; and an honeſt and well diſpos'd Perſon will ſupply the Defects of what has been ſaid, without my deſcending to more Particulars.

Give me leave now by way of Concluſion, to draw two ſhort Inferences from what has been ſaid.

1. If this be a Duty of ſo great a Nicety, and requires ſo many Talents to render it effectual and ſubſer-

ſervient to the great Ends of promoting Piety, we ought not raſhly and unadviſedly to take it in hand, but to conſider well whether we be in any good Meaſure qualify'd for it. It is not a heady and popular Cry after Reformation, which will render Men thus qualify'd; but a competent Stock of Knowledge, eſpecially of the Knowledge of human Nature, as well as Piety and good ſenſe, is required towards it. Zeal for Promoting the Intereſts of Religion is very commendable, and yet if it be not kept under proper Reſtrictions, nothing expoſes the Honour of Religion more.

2. It being a Duty of ſo great Neceſſity withal, thoſe who find themſelves really qualified for it, ought not to be diſcourag'd from performing it, tho' it ſometimes expoſe them to Inconveniences, or make them incur the Odium of thoſe, they take ſo unacceptable a Freedom with. Chriſtianity has very little Power over us, if we ſuffer our ſelves to be reſtrain'd from a known and indiſpenſible Duty, upon any worldly Motives whatever.

Let us therefore reſolve to diſcharge a good Conſcience, and leave the Conſequence of doing our Duty to the Diſpoſal of God. This was the Method which the Holy Apoſtles took, and which gave them that Peace and Satisfaction of Mind which the World cannot give, and is ſtill the leſs capable of pretending to give, the more we proſtitute our Conſciences to the corrupt Arts and Maxims of it. Our Bleſſed Lord himſelf complains, *That the World hated him, becauſe he teſtified of it that the Works thereof were Evil.* Let us follow his glorious Example in the ſame Excellent Deſign, where we have a juſt Call and Occaſion to exert our ſelves in it. *The Diſciple is not above his Maſter, nor the Servant above his Lord.* But this one Conſideration is ſufficient to raiſe us *above every Thing* in this World, that if we ſuffer with him in a conſtant and ſincere Obedience to the Commands of God, we ſhall be glorified with him. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON IV.

How far we are able to Account for the Difficulties that occur to us, in considering the Attributes of God, and the Wisdom, Goodness and Justice of his Providence, with Respect to the Sufferings of good Men.

JOB XI. 7.

Canst thou by searching find out God; canst thou find out the Almighty to Perfection?

WE find *Job*, throughout the former Chapter, expostulating *in the Bitterness of his Soul* with God, concerning the Reasons of those many and great Calamities, wherewith he was visited. After having opened his Complaint at the *first Verse*, with his being weary of Life, he takes up this pious Resolution, in the Words immediately following; *I will say unto God, do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.* And the remaining Part of his Discourse is little more than this Expostulation, diversified with many beautiful Turns of Thought and Expression.

Zophar

Zophar in this Chapter takes upon him to reprove *Job* for his Multitude of Words; and as if he had *reply'd againſt* God, in order to juſtify himſelf, after too free and audacious a Manner. For the Words foregoing my Text are plainly deſign'd to ſhew, that 'twere better for *Job* to reſolve the Cauſe of his Sufferings, into the unſearchable Wiſdom of God, than to ſtand ſo much on his own Vindication, or uſe ſo many vain and fruitleſs Endeavours to reconcile the Sufferings of Good Men with any clear and diſtinct Notions we have of the Attributes or Conduct of God. Which is all this excellent Perſon propoſes to himſelf, in his devout Remonſtrances and Complaints. The Argument upon which *Zophar* proceeds is this, That after all our Enquiries concerning the Nature or Attributes of God, and the Reaſons of his Conduct, we are ſtill to ſeek, and ſhall never be able perfectly to comprehend or account for them. And, to give the greater Force to this Argument, he puts it by way of Interrogation, *Canſt thou by ſearching find out God; canſt thou find out the Almighty to Perfection?*

But this, tho' it be a very juſt and noble Sentiment in it ſelf, is of no Conſequence to affect *Job*, or to ſhew, that he took a wrong Method in making God and the Methods of Divine Providence the Subject of his Speculations. So that he might have made the ſame Anſwer here which he does on another Occaſion; *How forcible are right Words? But what does your Arguing reprove? Ch.* 6. 25.

For tho' we have no adequate or entire Notion of what this Infinitely Perfect and All-glorious Being is, or upon what particular Motives he acts; yet ſo far, upon a modeſt and pious Search, may be known of him, as to give us a *true* Notion of his Attributes, and enable us in general, ſufficiently to juſtify his providential Diſpenſations.

In diſcourſing therefore upon the Words, I ſhall confine my ſelf to examine ſome of the greateſt Difficulties

ficulties, and how far we may be able to account for them.

First, In Relation to the Attributes. And
Secondly, To the Providence of God.

1. In Relation to the Divine Attributes. *Canst thou by searching find out God?* That is, Canst thou, after the most strict and diligent Enquiry, or the strongest Efforts of thy Intellectual Powers, discover in a clear and distinct View, what the Essential Properties are of a Being infinitely perfect? Not that the Essence and Properties of God are really distinct in themselves, but only in the Manner whereby (according to the Model of our Capacities) we conceive and speak of them. For were a real Distinction between the Nature and Attributes of God, which some Men, and particularly *Vorstius* has contended for, to be admitted; 'twould follow, that there are some Perfections accidental to the Divine Nature, and which of it self it has not; a Consequence which destroys the very Idea of a Being *absolutely* and infinitely perfect.

By the Attributes therefore of God we are to understand, the several Apprehensions we have of him according to the different Light wherein our Minds are capable of beholding him, or the different Subjects upon which he is pleas'd to operate. Thus, notwithstanding the perfect Simplicity and Unity of his Nature, when he punishes a Sinner, we call it an Act of Justice; when he suspends the Punishment due to him, an Act of Patience and Long-suffering; and when he pardons him, an Act of Mercy. And yet this Diversity of Operations in God with respect to us, does not infer, but that with respect to himself 'tis the self-same Act which punishes, which forbears, and which pardons. But since by reason of our Finite Capacities, we cannot in one pure and

and simple Idea comprehend that Infinite Perfection, which displays it self in such a wonderful and surprizing Variety *ad extra*; therefore we give it different Names, and, according to our slow and imperfect way of conceiving Things, affix to it different Ideas; which ye are not without a reasonable and true Foundation. For when the Mind conceives distinctly of the Attributes of God, it conceives right; as that (to keep to the former Instances) he is Just, Patient and Merciful; because it distinctly sees these Attributes; and what is not, cannot be seen: And yet it does not clearly discover, how they are *numerically* and entirely one with his Essence, consider'd as a pure, simple and undivided Act. which we are therefore forc'd to consider, by carrying the Eye of our Understanding this way and that way, backwards and forwards, and taking the Divine *Oeconomy*, as we do a Uniform and Magnificent Structure, as it were in Pieces, and viewing them one after another.

But I shall descend to observe to you some of the chief Difficulties, with respect to the Attributes of God in particular. And,

1. To that of his *Power*: This being the Attribute *Zopher* more directly poses *Job* with, in the Words of my Text; *Canst thou find out* the Almighty *to Perfection?* That Power is a Perfection, will not be disputed; and it seems no less evident, that Infinite Perfection must therefore be attended with Infinite Power. For I here all along suppose, with *Job* and his Friends, the Belief of a Being infinitely perfect. The Question here is not, How we shall find out God as to his Existence? This is all along taken for granted. Atheism, if after all there be really any such thing, is of a later Date, and more accommodated to the false Turn of Wit, and vain Shew of Philosophy and Free-thinking, which succeeding Ages have produc'd. *Job* and his Friends philosophiz'd more justly, by following

lowing Nature in its Primitive and Genuine Simplicity. Tho' there is no Book in the World, which treats of the difficulteſt Points in Natural Philoſophy, in a more Noble and Sublime manner than this, or which perhaps explains them ſo well.

But how ſhall we form to our ſelves any perfect Idea of Infinite Power? Here again Reaſon is confounded, and unable to bear it ſelf up in any Proportion to the Object. Eſpecially if we conſider Omnipotence, as exerting it ſelf into Act; as Operating, for we muſt here ſpeak as we can apprehend Things, on mere *Privation*, and raiſing almoſt an infinite Variety of Beings out of *Nothing*.

This was the Difficulty which ſo much perplexed *Ariſtotle*, and which he could never get over. But 'twas very unphiloſophical in this Great Man, for the avoiding a Difficulty (and there was no other way of avoiding it) to run into a downright Contradiction and Abſurdity; and to ſuppoſe a Being, call'd Matter, Coeternal with God the Firſt Cauſe, and Independent of him.

But 'tis not my Buſineſs here to dwell upon ſuch Nice Speculations. I am only to ſhew, how uncapable we are of finding out *the Almighty* to Perfection: Tho' nothing is more clear either from Revelation, than that *all Things*, that are Objects of Power, or imply no direct Repugnancy to Exiſtence, *are poſſible to God*; or from Reaſon, than that if Power be a Perfection, it muſt be infinite in a being infinitely Perfect.

But ſuppoſing indeed that Creation did not neceſſarily imply the Giving Exiſtence to Things which had none before, but only the Diſpoſing them into a beautiful, magnificent, and uſeful Order; yet in this View, the Conſtruction of the World gives us an Idea of Power, which we are more ſurprized and aſtoniſhed with the Effects of, than able to explain the Manner or Progreſs of its Operations; as God himſelf

himself represents in the most moving and forcible manner imaginable, *Chap.* 38. 43, *&c.* and therefore is very significantly described at the first Verse, as speaking to *Job* out of the *Whirlwind: Where wast thou when I laid the Foundations of the Earth? Declare if thou hast Understanding, who hath laid the Measures thereof, if thou knowest, or who hath stretched the Line upon it? Whereupon are the Foundations thereof fastned; or who laid the Corner-stone thereof? When the Morning Stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy.* The whole Chapter proceeds in the same Noble and Sublime Strain. And were we to consider this admirable Book merely as a Sacred Poem, in the main of Human Composition, it had been a very just and wise Contrivance in the Author of it, to ascribe to God the *greatest* Thoughts, that ever entred into the Heart of Man.

2. Another Attribute of God, which there is great Difficulty in raising our Thoughts to any clear Conception of, is Eternity. For who can distinctly apprehend, how one single and permanent Act of Duration should extend to all Periods of Time, without Succession of Time? And yet that Eternity is to be ascribed to God in this Sense, is evident, not only from the Terms wherein it is spoken of in Scripture, *Exod.* 3. 14. *Rev.* 1. 8. but from this plain Reason; That successive Duration supposes a Beginning, or first Period, from which all the future Moments of it take their Rise, and are to be computed. For there can be no Instant of a successive Duration past, but it was once present; and when it was so present, had none going before it. Which as it is a very convincing Argument against the Eternity of the World, which supposes at least an Eternal Successive Motion or Rotation of the Heavenly Orbs, so we necessarily infer from it, that God exists eternally, without any of the distinguishing Parts or Moments of Succession.

But how, according to *Boethius* his known Definition, the Eternity of God ſhould be one ſingle and permanent Act of Duration, preſent to all paſt as well as future Time, is a Difficulty ſufficient to turn the Edge of the fineſt Wit, and the Force of the ſtrongeſt Head. That a Being, *who was, and is, and is to come*, ſhould be ſo without Succeſſion of Time! And that there is no ſuch thing as firſt and laſt, paſt or future, with reſpect to his Exiſtence, but only in our imperfect manner of Conceiving Things! is a *Myſtery* indeed; which tho' ſome, out of the Plenitude of their Vanity, have pretended to account for upon clear and diſtinct Ideas, yet we muſt ſtill be content to remain ignorant of, and know only in Part.

3. With what Difficulties again are we ſurrounded when we conſider the Immenſity of God? That a Single Individual Subſtance, without Extenſion or Parts, ſhould ſpread it ſelf into, and over all Parts; that it ſhould fill all Places, and be circumſcrib'd in no Place; and yet be intimately (not to ſay eſſentially) preſent in every Place; are Truths diſcoverable by Reaſon, and confirm'd by Revelation. We cannot well think of God, but we muſt perceive the Evidence of them. For one of the firſt Thoughts that occurs to our Minds, when we contemplate this Glorious Being, is, that *he is a God at hand, and not a God afar off*, Jer. 23. 23. That we cannot hide our ſelves in ſecret from him, but that he fills Heaven and Earth; as it follows in the next Verſe.

But to ſay, that God is preſent only by his Knowledge, or the Efficacy of his Power, does not fully ſolve the Difficulties of Conceiving his *Ubiquity*. For his Attributes (as we have ſeen) being inſeparable from his Eſſence, except in our Modes of apprehending them; where he is preſent by any Attribute, there it would ſeem he is eſſentially preſent. And indeed, the Terms wherein Holy *David* ſpeaks of the Divine Omnipreſence, appear to import no leſs.

Whi-

Whither then shall I go from thy Spirit; or whither shall I flee from thy Presence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art there; if I make my Bed in Hell, behold thou art there. *Psal.* 139. 7, 8. Agreeably to which Sentiment, *Zophar* expresses himself concerning this Perfection of the Divine Nature, in the Words immediately following my Text. *It is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? The Measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.* 'Twas therefore particularly with respect to this Article, *David* confesses in the forecited *Psalm*, that such Knowledge was *too wonderful* for him, and so *high*, that he could not attain unto it. And for the same Reason, no doubt, Holy *Job*, instead of attempting to explain after what manner God is thus every where present, contents himself with an humble and implicit Acknowledgment that he is so. *Lo, he goeth by me, and I see him not; he passeth on also, and I perceive him not.* Chap. 9. 11. But,

4*thly*, The Difficulties, which have been most controverted and improved to the Disservice of Religion, are those which have been rais'd from a Consideration of God's Omniscience; particularly that Branch or Distinction of it, which we express by *Prescience*. And the Difficulties concerning it arise from hence, that God does not only fore-know what he has effectually *decreed* shall come to pass, but what is of a casual and contingent Nature, and depends on the good or ill Use Man will make of his Liberty. So that we must suppose in God a certain and determinate Knowledge of Events, which yet are of arbitrary and uncertain Determination in their Causes.

This is acknowledged a great Difficulty on all Hands; and the most clear and satisfactory Way of answering it, seems to be on the former Supposition, that God by the Infinity of his Nature, and one single Act of Duration, is present to all Time, and to all the Events that happen in Time; and that Futuri-

ty, with respect to him, is only a Term we are forc'd to make use of, from the Defects of our finite Capacity, and because we cannot form any distinct or adequate Notion of *Eternity*.

But we must acknowledge after all, that tho' this should be admitted as a good Solution to the Difficulty so far as it relates to God's Prescience, yet as to his *Predictions*, it still leaves us under an equal Incapacity of reconciling them, in any clear or distinct Manner, with the Contingency of future Events.

Whatever the infinite Extent or *Presentiality*, if I may so speak, of God's Knowledge, be with Respect to what we call Future; yet when a Divine Prophecy is once divulg'd, or committed to writing many Years before the Event happens, there 'tis presum'd the Event will certainly come to pass, tho' the Means of accomplishing it depend upon the free and arbitrary, and therefore uncertain, Determination of human Will.

'Tis true, we may suppose it agreeable enough to the Perfections of the Divine Nature, that God should in some particular and extraordinary Cases over-rule the Wills of Men to promote the great and good Designs of his Providence; and where he foretells any such Event, he may with greater Reason be suppos'd to *decree* it, and in his Decree to *foresee* it. But when Events of a contingent Nature, and which cannot be accomplish'd but by the Ministry or Concurrence of sinful Agents, are foretold by God; in this Case to suppose, that he over-rules, or by any positive Act of his Power, inclines the Wills of Men to such a *Concurrence*, gives us an Idea so shocking, and unworthy of his Holiness and Goodness, that 'tis the greatest wonder in the World, how any pious or good Man should ever have given into so dangerous, and, to say no worse of it, impious Hypothesis.

Some

Some therefore have deny'd God's certain Foreknowledge of Events, which depend on the free Choice of Man's Will. But beſides that ſeveral Prophecies in Scripture, which have received their Accompliſhment, are a ſufficient and direct Confutation of this Error; there is no Neceſſity of Countenancing it, in order to juſtify the Conduct of God, from being in any Reſpect *influential* on the Sins or Wickedneſs of Men. For however future Events may be preſented to the View of God, yet it does not by any Means follow from his Fore-knowledge of them, that he therefore deſtroys human Liberty. For Foreknowledge is but *Knowledge*, under a different Conſideration. But we ſee and know a thouſand Things, which we never in any Reſpect concurr'd to the Production of. So that indeed this Queſtion, how God ſhould foreſee the Actions of ſinful Men, without concurring towards them, ſeems to be capable of as eaſy a Solution, as how I can afterwards know that a Man has been guilty of any particular Crime, without my having conſented to it. There is no Neceſſity that Fore-knowledge, any more than After-knowledge, ſhould have any Influence or *Cauſality* on the Thing known. It might as well be argued, that my foreſeeing the Sun will riſe to morrow is the Cauſe of his Riſing: Or to produce an Inſtance of a moral Nature; that after our Saviour had declar'd *Judas* would betray him, the other Apoſtles who knew what our Saviour foretold would come to paſs, were for that Reaſon the Cauſe of his Apoſtacy.

Yet 'tis acknowledged after all, that both as to this and the other Attributes I have mention'd, we cannot find out God to Perfection. So far *Zophar*'s Argument is very juſt and concluſive. But ſhall we therefore infer, that the Perfections we would attribute to God, ought not to be aſcrib'd to him, as having no real Foundation? I have already obviated this falſe Conſequence, by ſhewing every where, that the Diffi-

culties which preſent themſelves to our Minds, when we think or ſpeak of the Attributes of God, do not ariſe from our Incapacity to prove that they are *Eſſential* to him, but from the Infinity and tranſcendent Excellency of his Nature, which we are not capable of raiſing our Conceptions fully up to. But this I ſay, is no more an Argument againſt the Truth of them, or our Reaſoning upon them, than that we ſhould not employ our Thoughts or Speculations on Matter or Motion, or the Formation of the World. Becauſe there are Difficulties, I take it, in Relation to them all, which the Wit of Man will never be able ſatisfactorily to account for, and to the perfect Clearing of all Difficulties.

'Tis a known Rule, That Objections ſtarted from a Mode of Conceiving Things, ought not to lie againſt acknowledg'd Truths. But certainly this Rule ought never to be more obſerv'd, than when Finite Minds are endeavouring to contemplate, or reaſon upon Infinite Perfection.

But are all the Attributes of God then equally above our Comprehenſion? Or have we no more clear and diſtinct Ideas of the Moral Perfections of his Nature, than of his Incommunicable Properties? Moſt certainly we have. Tho' a moſt Reverend Father of the Church has been pleas'd to aſſert, even with reſpect to the Moral Attributes of God, That *if we underſtand them literally and properly, ſo as to ſignify the ſame when applied to God and Men; it will not be eaſy to anſwer the Arguments of Unbelievers againſt them:* And, That *we do not know what theſe Moral Attributes are, but only ſee their Effects in the World* *.

Theſe Aſſertions being, I humbly conceive, of no great Force to bring Unbelievers to the Acknowledgment of the Truth, but rather tending to confirm them in their Prejudices againſt it; I ſhall beg Leave

* Archbiſhop of *Dublin*'s Sermon on Divine Predeſtination, *pag.* 35,--38.

in

in so proper a Place, to make a short Observation or two upon them. And,

1. I do not see how 'tis possible to convince or convert an Unbeliever, but by supposing Moral Virtues when apply'd to God, the same in Kind, tho' in a more perfect and consummate Degree, than they are in Men. Veracity (for Instance) is a Moral Virtue, and consists in a due Conformity of our Words, or Declarations, with our Thoughts. But if we have not the same Idea of it in God and Man; how shall we be able to prove against a Deist, that, supposing the Scriptures were reveal'd by God; yet either that 'tis his Intention Men should believe the Truth of them; or that the Doctrines contain'd in them, are really true of themselves.

After we have prov'd to an Unbeliever the Facts upon which the Truth of Christianity is establish'd, the best Method to make him submit to the Doctrines of it, is, to shew him they are reveal'd by God; who cannot *deny himself*, nor require Men to make wrong Judgments, and believe a Falshood. But to tell such an Unbeliever, that Truth and Sincerity are not the same in God, that they are, according to our Manner of apprehending them, when apply'd to Men, would be to invite him to embrace a Religion, which he could upon our own Principles have no rational Motives to believe.

2. When we are commanded to be Followers of God, and to imitate him; if we do not understand the Perfections he is imitable in, and we have no way of understanding them, but after the *manner* of Men; the Consequence will be, that God has at once impos'd an impracticable, and an unintelligible Command upon us.

3. When God expostulates with Men, concerning the Justice and Equality of his Ways, and leaves it to their own Determination, whether they are not

juſt and equal; as he particularly condeſcends to do, *Ezek* 18. 25. Theſe Two Things are evidently ſuppos'd: 1*ſt*, That Men have ſome general and ſtanding Notions of Moral Virtue. And 2*dly*, That God is willing to put the Matter upon this Iſſue; Whether his own Conduct and Methods of proceeding with them, be not entirely agreeable to thoſe Notions? And yet as to the latter Reſpect, it is own'd there may be greater Difficulty in making a Judgment. For tho' there is nothing we have a more clear and diſtinct Idea of, than the Moral Perfections of God, conſider'd in themſelves; yet as to his External Operations, the particular Reaſons of his Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Juſtice, may not always appear equally clear and evident to us. But this leads me to conſider in the next Place, how far we are able to account for ſome of the principal Difficulties in relation,

Secondly, To the Providence of God. And here I ſhall wholly confine my ſelf to the main Subject of the Debate between *Job* and his Friends, the Sufferings of Good Men: And ſhall ſhew ſeverally, how far God's *Wiſdom*, his *Goodneſs*, and his *Juſtice*, may appear to be affected, or impeached on the Account of them. And,

1. With reſpect to his *Wiſdom*. 'Tis the Character of a wiſe Agent, to lay down and proſecute ſuch Meaſures, as conduce moſt effectually to the End he propoſes. Now one of the principal Deſigns of God, is to promote the Intereſts of Religion, and keep up an awful and juſt Senſe of it in the Minds of Men. Yet the Sufferings of Good Men may be thought, in Two conſiderable Reſpects, to obſtruct ſuch a Deſign.

1. As they ſeem to leſſen the Force of thoſe Arguments, which we draw from the Temporal Rewards of Religion. And,

2. As

2. As Circumstances of Distress are commonly suppos'd to sowre and imbitter the Spirits of Men.

1. As to what is objected from the Temporal Rewards of Religion; the Sufferings of Good Men are indeed a plain Indication, that we cannot make any Estimate of God's Love or Hatred, *by all that goeth before* us. * We need no other Argument to convince us, how *little* the great Things, as we judge them, of this World are in the Esteem of God, than to consider upon what Sort of People he ordinarily bestows them.

* Vi Mor Bru Cha Vol.

We grant, under the Law, the Promises made to the *Jews* run all along upon Temporal Blessings and Enjoyments. 'Tis to this Day disputed by the *Learned*, whether from the Letter of the Law, the Promise of a Future Life could be clearly made out, without strain'd and remote Consequences. But 'tis clear beyond all Dispute, that the principal Motives to our Christian Obedience, the *Motives* every where insisted on in the Gospel, are taken from the Happiness and Rewards of a Life after this.

The Words of the Apostle, *Godliness hath the Promise of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come*; seem indeed to imply, that Religion entitles Men to the Temporal Advantages of Life, and are frequently made use of to establish this Doctrine.

Yet I conceive, with Submission, the most that can be inferr'd from the Words is; if they do not principally relate to the inward Peace and Tranquility of Mind, which naturally flow from a Religious Conduct; or, to the inward Consolations wherewith God is sometimes pleas'd more eminently to reward Piety in this Life: If the Words, I say, are not to be explain'd in one or both these Senses; what we can conclude from them is, that God will distinguish Good Men by some Special Favours of his Providence in this World, where he really sees such a Distinction for their Good, or the Good of others, or

the

the Intereſts of Religion in General; or where there are not Reaſons on all theſe Accounts for their Sufferings, which preponderate thoſe for their Temporal Proſperity. But all this depending on a great Variety of Accidents and Circumſtances which are known only to God, he alone is able to judge whether of theſe Two States of Life be moſt proper for Good Men.

That they ſhall have the neceſſary Supports of Life, is what we conclude from the Goodneſs and Beneficence of the Divine Nature, and the Special Intereſt which Religion gives them in the Divine Favour; yet I do not certainly know, whether this can be concluded from any *expreſs* and direct *Promiſe* in the Goſpel; thoſe Words of our Saviour, *Seek ye firſt the Kingdom of Heaven, and all theſe things* (*i. e.* the neceſſary Supports of Life) *ſhall be added unto you*; ſeem to have been particularly addreſſed to the Apoſtles of Chriſt, and not to his Auditors in general. And therefore it has been obſerv'd, that after our Saviour had before laid down many Excellent Rules and Inſtructions in common, he turns him at the 25th Verſe, as it were, by way of Application, to his Apoſtles; *Therefore I ſay*, unto You, *take no Thought*, &c. And there is the greater Reaſon to ſuppoſe this, becauſe what he ſays to them, is not in a proper Senſe, or indeed without a pretty *free* Interpretation, applicable to other Perſons. For certainly it could never be the Intention of our Lord, to condemn in general a provident Care for ſuch Things of this Life, without which there is no Living. But as to the Apoſtles, who were to be ſent upon a *Special* Commiſſion from him, and whom he therefore charg'd to make no Proviſion for their Journey; and thereby gave them Aſſurance, that he would take the Care of providing for them, in ſome *extraordinary* Way himſelf: In *them*, I ſay, that provident Care which is juſt and neceſſary to other People, would have been highly culpable,

and

and an Argument of their diſtruſting our Saviour, and the *Power of God.*

God forbid, that I ſhould appear to advance any Thing which may leſſen *any* juſt or proper Motive to a Religious Life. I would only obſerve, and I am not alone in this Obſervation, That laying too great Streſs on the Temporal Rewards of Religion, except ſuch as relate rather to public Communities than private Perſons, ſeems of ill Conſequence to Religion: And that on the two following Accounts.

Firſt, As it tends to confirm People in an Opinion, wherein they are generally too far gone already, that *a Man's Life*, or the Happineſs of human Life, contrary to what our Saviour has determined, *conſiſteth in the Abundance of the Things which a Man poſſeſſeth.* They argue, that the good Things of this World, as we call them, are not ſo inconſiderable, as the Scriptures ſometimes appear to repreſent them; and as Divines, when their Subject leads them to conſider the Vanity and Uncertainty of all worldly Enjoyments, *would* repreſent them: Seeing at other Times they ſet themſelves with great Art and Application to prove, that theſe *ſlight* Matters ought to be conſider'd as ſome of the moſt powerful Motives and Arguments to a Godly Life. And perhaps the ſeveral Topics of Rhetoric and Perſuaſion have never been more exhauſted by Divines, than upon this Subject. But this is not all, Men are hereby further tempted,

2. To ſuſpect the Truth of Religion it ſelf, or to make falſe and uncharitable Judgments on Perſons truly Religious. When they are told how natural and direct a tendence Religion has to promote their temporal Intereſts, and that God by *ſpecial* Acts of his Favour or Providence, will ſtill further the natural Tendency of it to this End; and yet find on the other Hand that good Men are frequently expos'd to the greateſt Miſeries and Calamities of this Life; whilſt they ordinarily obſerve that wicked Men come in no

ſuch

such Misfortune, but all Things go smoothly on with them, and succeed to their Desires; 'twill be natural enough for them to conclude, either that there is very little depending on the Truth of that Religion wherein these Promises are made; or if there be, that we confound the Distinction of wicked and good Men; calling those Virtuous, who are at the Bottom down-right Hypocrites, and the chief of Sinners; and being no less mistaken on the other side, in reputing those for vicious and ungodly Persons who are distinguish'd by so many special and shining Favours of God's Providence.

'Twas out of some such mistaken Notion, the Friends of *Job* represented to him, that he was certainly an Enemy to God and all Goodness, and that whatever he pretended to Religion, he was secretly and in his Heart a very great and abominable Sinner. Thus *Eliphaz* in particular attacks him, Ch. 22. 5. *Is not thy Wickedness great, and thine Iniquities infinite?* The rest of them in their Speeches endeavour to comfort *Job* with the like charitable Suspicions. And it seems indeed to have been their great and fundamental Error, and which runs through all their Discourses, that the Blessings of this Life are so many visible Tokens of God's Love; and the Evils or Adversities of it, so many contrary Expressions of his Hatred and Displeasure towards Men.

But if God, by the Sufferings of Good Men, appear so much to favour and countenance this Prejudice, how shall we justify his Wisdom in inflicting them? I answer, That 'tis a Prejudice unjustly conceiv'd; because God has many *other* wise Reasons for the Sufferings of Good Men, which overbalance these, that are brought as Objections against his Wisdom in them. But 'tis sufficient to say in General at present, that God is not oblig'd to alter his Conduct for the real Good and Interests of Religion, which are sometimes highly promoted by the Exemplary Piety

ety and Conſtancy of Good Men under their Sufferings, for the ſake of ſome ill-grounded or *accidental* Miſtakes, which their Sufferings may occaſion. But 'tis ſaid,

2. That Misfortunes and Diſappointments are apt to ſowre and imbitter the Spirits of Men, and upon this Account alſo may be thought prejudicial to the Intereſts of Religion, eſpecially of the Chriſtian Religion; there being nothing more contrary to the Genius and Deſign of it than the Temper we are conſidering. It may be ſufficient here to reply, that Peeviſhneſs or ill Humour is not a natural, much leſs a neceſſary Conſequence of Sufferings or Diſappointments. The *Strength* of that Perſon is *but ſmall*, who loſes his Temper, as it denotes a Spirit of univerſal Love and Benevolence, tho' with the *loſs* of every Thing beſides. But the true Reaſon why People in a State of Adverſity are preſum'd to be of a leſs agreeable, eaſy and affable Temper, is, that their Circumſtances give them an Opportunity of obſerving ſome Things, which Perſons of Ingenuity ought not otherwiſe to ſuppoſe human Nature *capable* of. And tho it is a very weak and fooliſh Thing for any Perſon to grow uneaſy to himſelf, and to all about him, becauſe Matters do not go better with him, yet certainly he is not for this Reaſon oblig'd, to make falſe Judgments of Things, or Perſons, or to call Infidelity or Oppreſſion, Ingratitude or ill Manners, by a wrong Name. This would be to put Men, in order to preſerve the Appearances of their Temper, upon ſhutting their Eyes; and yet without carrying this Obſervation, *That Sufferings vitiate the beſt Tempers*, thus far, which is further perhaps than 'tis uſually carried, there will be found very little or nothing in it.

I am to conſider, in the next Place, the Prejudices that lie, on Account of the Sufferings of good Men,

2*dly*, Againſt the Goodneſs of God. This occaſion'd a Difficulty, which *Job* himſelf propoſes, *Is it*

good

good, says he to God, *that thou shouldst oppress? That thou shouldst despise the Work of thine Hands*, Ch. 10. 3. The Notion we have of Goodness, is, that it disposes to good and beneficent Actions. But Pain and Sickness, Want and Disgrace, are Things naturally *Evil:* And therefore it may seem inconsistent with the Nature of that Supreme and All-Perfect Being, who *is Good* and *does Good*, that he should inflict them: For what End, if we consider the Thing in it self, can God have in afflicting and *grieving* the Children of Men, especially such of them, as sincerely endeavour to please him. This seeming Contrariety between the Sufferings of good Men, and the Perfections of the Divine Nature, occasioned that other Expostulation of *Job*, Ch. 13. 24. *Wherefore hidest thou thy Face, and holdest me for thine Enemy? Wilt thou break a Leaf driven to and fro, and wilt thou pursue the dry Stubble?* And it must be granted, that did God afflict *willingly*, or had he no other Design in the Sufferings of good Men, but only that they should suffer; this would directly overthrow all the Notions and Ideas we have of his Goodness. But when we consider the *many* excellent Ends, and so highly beneficial both to themselves and others, which God has in exercising the Faith and Virtues of good Men by Afflictions; this is no more an Argument against his Goodness, than 'tis against the Tenderness of a Parent to correct his Child, or to put him upon some present Hardships and Employments, in order both to his own future Advantage, and the Service of the Publick.

The last Difficulty to be consider'd, is,

4. Concerning the Justice of God. 'Tis the principal Office of Justice to proportion Rewards and Punishments, according to the Deserts or Demerits of Men. And this Sentiment occasion'd another very strong Prejudice of *Job*'s Friends against him, which all their *Responses* are full of, and wherewith they perpetu-

petually insult him. They suppose, if he had been really the innocent, and righteous Person he pretended to be, a Just God would not have laid so heavy a Load of Afflictions upon him. *If thou wert pure and upright*, says *Bildad*, Ch. 8. 6. *surely he would awake for thee, and make the Habitation of thy Righteousness prosperous.* The Reason whereof is given at the 20th Verse, because *God will not cast away a perfect Man, neither will he help the Evil Doers.* This is exactly to the Tune of the old popular Objection, *Cur Bonis male, Malis bene?* But there is nothing easier than to give a clear and full Solution to it. And that, to mention no other Reasons at present,

First, Because the best of Men are conscious to themselves of many Sins and Defects, which might justly have provok'd God to inflict what they suffer upon them: Or rather, whatever their Sufferings be in this World, they ought humbly to acknowledge, that *God exacteth of* them *less than* their *Iniquities deserve*, ver. 6. Thus *Job* in his calmer Thoughts, and when he was not heated with Dispute, and the perverse Reasoning of his Friends, confesseth, *If I justify my self, mine own Mouth shall condemn me; If I say I am perfect it shall* also *prove me perverse.*

This one Consideration, that we are Sinners, and that God might justly have cut us off in our Sins, and destroyed us *at once* for ever, sufficiently clears his Justice in the Sufferings, and in the greatest Sufferings which he lays upon the best of us. *Wherefore*, then, as the Prophet argues, *doth a* living *Man complain, a Man for the punishment of his Sins*, Lam. 3. 39.

Secondly, Because this Life is not the proper State of Rewards and Punishments, but of Trial and Discipline; and therefore indeed the Afflictions of good Men, are not to be consider'd so much as Acts of *Justice*, for the manifestation of divine Justice is principally reserv'd for the final Judgment, as Acts of *Goodness*

neſs and *Mercy*, whereby God trains up good Men, by ſuch Methods as he ſees moſt proper, for the Happineſs he has prepared for them in a future and everlaſting Life.

Having ſpoken to the ſeveral Particulars I propos'd, I ſhall conclude all with a Word or two of Exhortation. And,

1. Tho' the Perfections of God are too bright for the intellectual Eye of Man to take a clear and diſtinct View of, yet let us endeavour to have the beſt and largeſt Thoughts of them, we poſſibly can. For tho' the Diſproportion between the Faculty and the Object is here infinite, yet there is ſuch a *Congruity* between them, as renders the Knowledge of God and his Attributes, ſo far as *can be known* of them, more delightful to the Mind than all other Speculations whatever. And 'tis but juſt indeed in the Reaſon of the Thing, that the beſt and nobleſt Subject, ſhould give us the higheſt and moſt exquiſite Pleaſure in our Contemplations of it. And the more we meditate on the Glorious Perfections of God's Nature, the more will our Attention ſtill be fortify'd, and the Capacity of our Mind enlarg'd; and that not only on a natural Account, as the Strength of the Mind, as well as of the Body, is improv'd by Labour and Exerciſe, but as Attention is a kind of natural Prayer of the Mind to God, which he ſeldom fails to anſwer in thoſe that approach him, and perſevere in it, with a larger Meaſure of his *Illuminating* Grace. 'Twas *David*'s employing his Meditations ſo much upon God, that at once improv'd his Devotions to ſo inimitable a Strain, and gave him ſo high and inexpreſſible a Taſte in them. But,

2. As we cannot always keep the View of our Minds ſteady upon thoſe Dazling, Bright, and Glorious Attributes of *Omnipotence*, *Eternity*, *Immenſity*, and *Omniſcience*, and the like; let us frequently reflect on thoſe Moral Perfections of the Divine Nature, where-

of

of we are able to form more clear and distinct Ideas, and whereby our own Conduct ought to be regulated. For as they are the true Foundation of all our Reasonings on Moral Truths, so nothing can be of worse Consequence to Religion or Morality, than false and unworthy Notions of them. And tho' there are, as we have observ'd, some seeming Difficulties in accounting for the Methods of God's Providence, with respect to the external Acts of his Wisdom, Goodness and Justice, yet they are such as afford the Mind a very agreeable Entertainment, in the Solutions it finds it self capable, upon a little Reflection of giving to them. And therefore, notwithstanding what is here urged by *Zophar*, to shew our Incapacity of finding out God to Perfection, *Job* is not discourag'd, but resolves to proceed in his Divine Conversation with God. *Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God*, Chap. 13. 3.

3dly and lastly, Since we cannot by Searching find out the Almighty to Perfection, nor even discover all the particular Reasons of his Providence in this World, let us labour for Eternity; for that blessed State, wherein all the Difficulties, which now perplex us, in contemplating his Glorious Attributes, will be perfectly cleared up, and the most intricate Methods of his Providence, both with respect to publick Revolutions, and private Persons, will appear in their true and full Light. Let us, I say again, as ever we desire to find out God to Perfection, prepare for that Blessed, and ever Blessed State, wherein *we shall see him as he is*, and our Minds will not only be united to him in perfect Vision, but our Hearts in perfect Love: Wherein, to conclude all with the Words of the Apostle, *we may be able to comprehend with all Saints, what is the Breadth, and the Length, and Depth, and Highth*; and to know the Love of Christ, which passeth Knowledge, *and be filled with all* the Fullness *of God*. Amen.

SERMON V.

Of the Stated Times of God's Worſhip, particularly the Lord's Day; with proper Rules and Directions for the Obſervation of it.

LEV. XXVI. 2.

Ye ſhall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my Sanctuary; I am the Lord.

IN the former Verſe, God having by *Moſes* cautioned the *Jews* againſt Idolatry, he gives them here in Charge two important Rules in Reference to his own Worſhip. The Firſt reſpects the Stated Times of it: *Ye ſhall keep my Sabbaths.* The Second *reſpects* the Place appropriated to it: *And reverence my Sanctuary.* The Reaſon both to enforce theſe Two Rules of Divine Worſhip, and the Caution againſt Idolatry, is ſubjoin'd in the following Words, *I am the Lord.* I, who have alone a Right to be worſhip'd, and who will not *give my glory unto another*, command you to obſerve, in the moſt devout and ſolemn Manner, ſuch Times and Places, as are more immediately conſecrated or ſet apart for my Worſhip.

In diſcourſing upon the Words, my Buſineſs ſhall be to enquire how far, what is here commanded the

Jews,

Jews in relation to the Time, and Place of God's Publick Worſhip, is obligatory upon us Chriſtians.

My firſt Enquiry, and to which I wholly confine my ſelf at preſent, ſhall be according to the Order of my Text, concerning the Time of it: *Ye ſhall keep my Sabbaths.* In order to a Reſolution herein, theſe Two Things ſeem proper to be *diſtinctly* conſider'd.

Firſt, What were the Reaſons upon which God might be ſuppos'd under the Law to have inſtituted more Solemn and Set Times of Worſhip. And,

Secondly, How far thoſe Reaſons hold good under the *Chriſtian* Diſpenſation.

1*ſt* then, I am to ſhew what were the Reaſons upon which God might be ſuppos'd under the Law to have inſtituted more Solemn and Set Times of Worſhip.

Now theſe Reaſons were ſuch as in general either flow'd from the Natural Propriety and Fitneſs of the Inſtitution it ſelf, or ſuch, as had a more peculiar Reſpect to the State and Condition of the *Jewiſh* People.

As to the Reaſonableneſs of the Inſtitution in general, 'twas highly agreeable to the Natural Light, and Notions of Mankind, upon theſe following Accounts.

1. That all External Worſhip is deſign'd to give us Impreſſions of greater Awe and Reverence for the Divine Majeſty. Now ſuch is the Frame and Temper of Human Nature, that Men have much leſs Regard for thoſe Things that are common, than for thoſe which have ſome peculiar Mark of Diſtinction ſet upon them. This is the Argument which the great Schoolman uſes for appropriated Times of Publick Worſhip. "And hence, *ſays he*, ariſes a general and "prevailing Cuſtom in the World, that Perſons of "Authority and Superior Condition, who ought to

" be more highly esteem'd, agree to distinguish them-
" selves by richer and more pompous Ornaments of
" Dress, or by the Splendor and Magnificence of
" their Habitations. For the same Reason, *continues*
" *he*, 'twas requisite that there should have been *Spe-*
" *cial* Times, and a *Special* Tabernacle, and *Special*
" Vessels, and a *Special* Ministry, for the more so-
" lemn Performance of God's Worship, and in or-
" der to affect the Minds of Men with a greater
" Awe and Reverence of him. †

The Wise Son of *Syrach* gives the same Reason for God's instituting peculiar Days of Religious Solemnity and Worship, in Answer to that Fanatical Question, *Why doth one Day excell another, when as all the Light of every Day of the Year is of the Sun?* He replies, *By the Knowledge of the Lord* they were distinguish'd, *and he alter'd Seasons and Feasts: Some of them hath he made high Days, and hallowed them; and some of them hath he made ordinary Days*, Eccl. 33. 7, 8, 9.

2. It being one of the First Principles of Natural Religion, that God is to be publickly Worship'd, *Order* requires that there should be some Determinate and Publick Times set apart for his Worship; and *Piety*, that such Times should be Vacations from the common Business and Affairs of Human Life. But were Men uncertain as to the proper Time of God's Publick Worship, How could it be expected that Religious Assemblies for it should either be so full, or the Worship it self so regular and uniform as it ought? How would People be divided between their Business and their Devotion, and stand in continual Suspence, were there no known Rule to determine the Point, which of them they ought to follow.

3. It being a further End of Religious Worship to advance the Spiritual Life, and bring us nearer unto God; 'tis not only agreeable to *Piety*, but to all the

† *Prima Secundæ Quæst.* 102.

Maxims

Maxims of Religious Prudence, that the Times appropriated to the more Solemn Worſhip of God, ſhould be diſtinguiſhed by a Ceſſation from the common Buſineſs of Life, that by this Means our Minds being wholly taken off from Earthly Things, they may be more open to the Heavenly Impreſſions of *Grace* and *Truth*.

Theſe are ſome of the Natural Reaſons upon which we may account for God's commanding his People to *keep his Sabbath*, that is, all the Stated and Solemn Times of his Publick Worſhip; but what I have here principally an Eye to, is the Inſtitution of the Sabbath or Seventh Day, which the *Jews* were ſo ſtrictly enjoin'd to keep Holy in the Fourth Commandment.

Now the Two principal Reaſons of this Inſtitution, which I was to conſider more particularly in reference to the State and Condition of that People, ſeem to have been,

Firſt, That hereby they acknowledg'd God to be *the Lord*, the Creator, and Governor of the World. And,

Secondly, That they acknowledg'd him to be in a more Eminent and Peculiar Manner *their* God, by delivering them out of the Hand of *Egypt*.

1. The former of theſe Reaſons may ſeem indeed to have nothing in it peculiar to the *Jews*: God is the Creator of all Mankind: So that as they ſtand in this Relation to him, all Nations under Heaven are obliged to do him Service, and give him the Worſhip due unto his Name; yet I do not doubt to affirm, that even in *this* Reſpect, God in the Inſtitution of the Sabbath had Regard to the State and Condition of the *Jews in particular*. For,

1. 'Tis evident, that theſe People had a very ſtrong Inclination to Idolatry, and were to be guarded the more ſtrictly againſt it, becauſe the Nations round about them were ſo wholly given up to it. Now the

visible Benefits which Men receiv'd from the Influence of those Heavenly Bodies, the Sun, Moon, and Stars, were in all probability the chief Occasion of the Idolatrous Worship paid to them. 'Tis very natural for us to shew our Gratitude and Respects to those who have in any signal or sensible manner obliged us. And the Heathens carrying their Thoughts no higher than these Secondary Causes, supposed that all the Blessings they enjoy'd from the Fertility and Produce of the Earth, and from healthy and temperate Seasons, were to be ascrib'd to them.

To prevent the spreading of these Idolatrous Notions and Practices among his own People, and which of themselves they were strongly enough dispos'd to give into, 'twas an Expedient worthy the Wisdom of God, to institute a standing Memorial of the *Creation*, and to provide that the Returns of it should be so frequent, as to keep up a Sense of their Duty to the *Creator*, and of their Dependance on him, continually fresh in the Minds of that People. To which End God determin'd, that this Solemn *Feast*, if I may so term it, of the Creation, should have its Revolution every Seventh Day.

The *Jews* being so sensibly and so often reminded, that the God they worship'd was the God that made the World, could not so easily apostatize from him to Idols, nor stifle those continual Impressions of a Religion, which taught them that the Sun, Moon, and Stars, the Gods which the Heathen worship'd, were no Gods, but the Work of His Hands, who made Heaven and Earth, and all that therein is.

And therefore, *Ezek.* 31. 13. God himself expressly assigns this as the Reason of his Instituting the Sabbath, That the *Jews* might acknowledge him to be the Supreme Deity, the Maker and Governor of the World. *Verily, my Sabbath ye shall keep; for 'tis a Sign between me and you throughout your Generations, that ye may know that I am the* Lord.

For

For the same Reason probably, *Moses*, in the History of the Creation, is not only so circumstantial in recounting the Work of each Day, but particularly observes, *Gen.* 1. 11. That the Fruits of the Earth, and *the Trees yielding Fruit*, were produced, before the Sun, Moon, and Stars were created. This was a sensible Argument to the *Jews*, that the Heavenly Bodies, which the Heathens paid their Devoirs to, were only Secondary or Instrumental Causes in the Hands of God; and that he could, if he had thought fit, have supply'd Mankind with the Produce of the Earth, and all the proper Supports and Conveniencies of Life, without them. This is a much more Natural Improvement of these Words of *Moses*, than what some of the *Jewish* Rabbies have inferr'd from them; That the Creation of the World was in the Month of *September*, because that is the Season wherein the Fruits of the Earth ordinarily come to their Maturity.

2. But there is another Reason it may not be improper to observe to you, why the *Jewish* Sabbath was instituted in Memory of the Creation. The Promises made to that People run all along upon Temporal Blessings and Enjoyments; as, of a Land flowing with Milk and Honey; Peace, Plenty, Prosperity, Victory of their Enemies, and the like. To confirm them therefore in a steddy Belief, that he who had promis'd these Worldly Blessings, was able also to perform; it was very becoming the Wisdom of God, that he should continually be represented to them under the Notion of a *Creator*, the Supreme Lord and Governor of the World; and, that there should be some Solemn Times set apart for acknowledging him as such.

What I here observe, is not obscurely intimated in those Words, *Exod.* 31. 16. *Wherefore the Children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their Generation, for a perpetual Covenant. It is a Sign between Me and the Children of Israel for ever.*

What was ſtipulated on God's Part, in the Covenant he entred into with the *Jews*, we have already obſerv'd. He promis'd them, if they would be willing and obedient, which was the Condition on their Part, they ſhould eat the Fat of the Land. 'And 'twas a very proper and wiſe Method in order to ſecure the Obedience of a People, who had the Intereſts of this World ſo much at Heart, and no expreſs Promiſe of another, that a Day, whoſe Returns might be frequent, ſhould be ſet them, wherein they were ſolemnly to own God for the Author and Diſpenſer of the Bleſſings he promis'd; and therefore the further to enforce the Obſervation of the Sabbath, 'tis added in the next Words: *For in Six Days the Lord made Heaven and Earth.* This was a Reaſon for obſerving the Sabbath, conſidered in it ſelf, common to the reſt of Mankind; it muſt therefore reſpect the *Jews* more *particularly*, as the Sabbath was a *Sign* that the Creator had by a Fœderal Right intitled them to the ſpecial Benefits of the Creation, and Favours of his Providence.

And upon this Account, that Natural Principle of Religion, That there is a God, who made the World, and is the abſolute Proprietor and Maſter of it, is ſo often inculcated to the *Jews* in the Writings of *Moſes* and the Prophets. For the ſame Reaſon they are no leſs frequently reminded, that the Bleſſings they enjoy'd were not to be aſcrib'd either to their own Endeavours, or the Influence of Second Cauſes, but to the over-ruling Providence of God. Whatever is done, or ſeems to be done by the Operation of inferior Agents, he is repreſented as doing immediately himſelf. 'Tis he, *that openeth the Doors of Heaven, and ſendeth the former and the later Rain:* 'Tis he *who watereth the Hills from his Chambers*, and *ſatisfieth the Earth with the Fruit of his Works:* Who cauſeth the Graſs to *grow for the Cattle, and Herb for the Service of Man.*

'Tis

'Tis true, we see nothing in these Events contrary to the Establish'd Order of natural Causes: But this is no Argument, that God, in whose Hands are all the Springs of Motion, does not direct and turn them to what Ends and Purposes he thinks fit. Upon which Occasion, Judge *Hale*, in his Origination of Mankind, has this Judicious Reflection: That, *though we often attribute, as well Mischiefs, as Deliverances to accidental natural Causes*, yet many times they are *Actus Imperati of the Divine Providence, as much, and as really*, and truly, as the Motion of his Pen was the *Actus Imperatus of his Will at that time*, Chap. 1. pag. 37.

He afterwards observes, "That altho' the regular Part of Nature is seldom varied, but ordinarily "keeps its constant Tract, as the Motions of the "Heavenly Bodies: Yet the Meteors, as the Winds, "Rain, Snow, Thunder, Exhalations, and the like, "which are in themselves more unstable, and less "mancipated to stated and regular Motions, are "oftentimes employ'd in the World to very various "Ends, and in very various Methods of the special "Divine Providence. And that therefore the Winds "and Storms are stil'd in a peculiar Manner, *Winds "and Storms fulfilling his Word*, Psal. 148. 8. And, "*He bringeth his Winds out of his Treasury.* And again, "*Hath the Rain a Father, or who begot the Drops of Dew?* "Job 38. 28. And again, *Can any of the Vanities of "the Gentiles give Rain?* Jer. 14. 22.

Thus the Institution of the Sabbath was a wise Contrivance, not only to engage the *Jews* constantly to remember their Creator, but also to teach them, that the special Favours and Blessings he conferr'd on them, were so many continued Acts of Creation. Both which Considerations, as they were very powerful Motives to Obedience on their Part, so they gave them the highest Assurance, that there could be no Distrust of God's performing the Conditions on his own. But then,

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2. I obſerve in the next Place, that beſides the common and ordinary Bleſſings of Life, in the Productions of what we call Nature, the miraculous and *Supernatural* Effects of God's Power in delivering the *Jews* out of *Egypt*, was a further Reaſon, and which particularly reſpected them, of his inſtituting the Sabbath: That being one of the moſt conſiderable and ſignal Revolutions, which happened to the Children of *Iſrael*, and ſo ſurprizing an Inſtance of the Divine Favour and good Providence towards them, 'twas proper ſome ſtated Time ſhould be obſerved for it, which might keep it continually freſh in their Memory. There was indeed a Day by the ſpecial Command of God, to be obſerv'd throughout their Generation with great Solemnity in Remembrance of it. Yet the Wiſdom of God thought fit, to the end a more lively and permanent Senſe of it might be preſerved in their Minds, that every Sabbath-Day ſhould be alſo a ſtanding Memorial to them of ſo great a Mercy. And therefore this is aſſign'd as one particular Reaſon of God's commanding them to ſanctify that Day, Deut. 5. 14. *And remember that thou waſt a Servant in the Land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty Hand, and a ſtretched-out Arm*, therefore *the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day.*

Thus I have conſider'd both the Reaſons in general, of God's inſtituting Solemn and Set Times of Worſhip, and what thoſe Reaſons more particularly were with reſpect to the Inſtitution of the *Jewiſh* Sabbath; and hereby I have prepared a way for the more eaſy and ſatisfactory Reſolution of my next Enquiry, to which I now proceed, *viz.*

2. How far thoſe Reaſons in either reſpect, hold good under the Chriſtian Diſpenſation? And,

1ſt, The general Reaſons I laid down, for ſetting a-part ſome ſolemn Time for the Worſhip of God, certainly extend to us Chriſtians, and to all the Nations

tions under Heaven, as well as to the *Jews*. 'Tis not neceſſary here to repeat thoſe Reaſons; they are ſuch, I have obſerv'd, as flow from the natural Light of our own Minds, and the Tendency of the Thing it ſelf to promote the Honour of God, and Intereſts of Religion, which are the great and principal Ends of all Religious Worſhip. Indeed when we conſider, that to every thing under the Sun there is a Time, and that the natural Order of Things requires that there ſhould be ſo; it ſeems highly reaſonable, that ſome Stated Seaſons ſhould be appropriated to His Service, to whom we owe all the Moments of our Time, and the Capacity of all our other Enjoyments.

There can be no Diſpute then, as to the Moral Obligations Chriſtians are under of obſerving ſome Stated Seaſons for the more Solemn and Publick Worſhip of God: Jeſus Chriſt did not come to deſtroy any one Duty ariſing from the Law of Nature, or the common Principles of natural Religion, but to give all ſuch Duties, as had any Foundation herein, their utmoſt Force and Complement.

And for this Reaſon we conclude, that not only every Seventh Day, but all other Days which are appointed by Authority of the Church to be kept Holy, are to be obſerved as *ſuch* by us. For if the Church, conſider'd as a Religious Society, has not Power to make ſuch Laws, as are proper to promote the Intereſts of Religion, and to bind its Members to the Obſervance of them, then the Rights of it ſeem to be more precarious and inſignificant, than thoſe of any other regular Society upon Earth.

I grant indeed, it does not therefore follow, that what tends to the greater Advantage of any Society, is to be ſuppos'd in the Power or Commiſſion of it; becauſe it ought perhaps to regulate it ſelf with regard to the Intereſts of other Societies, and to do nothing which may claſh or interfere with them. But ſetting this Limitation aſide, certainly every Society has in the

the very Reason of its Institution, a sufficient Power and Authority to prescribe such Rules to its Members, and whereby they ought to be concluded, as visibly conduce to the common Good and Benefit of it, and of every one of them in particular.

Such are the Rules the Church prescribes, with respect to Days of Publick and Religious Appointment. The Honour of God and of Religion in general, and the Edification of particular Persons, are at once visibly promoted by a due and devout Observation of them.

'Tis true, the Members of the Church are also Members of Civil Society, which cannot be supported, except Men ordinarily attend to their proper Callings and Employments. And therefore the Rule of Bishop *Taylor*, (*Holy Living*, *Pag.* 227.) seems in the main to be very reasonable, tho' not perhaps express'd with the greatest Caution. "That as every "Church is to be sparing in the Number of her Ho-"ly-Days, so also should she be temperate in her In-"junctions, not imposing them, but upon voluntary "and unbusy'd Persons, without Snare or Burthen.

But give me leave here to add, that tho' Ecclesiastical Injunctions are design'd for Edification, and not for Destruction; yet Men ought in the Case I am considering, as in all others, wherein they would dispense with themselves from such Injunctions, to deal impartially with their own Consciences, and not pretend those Excuses for not complying with the Orders of the Church, which in the Judgment of it were never intended, and cannot reasonably be interpreted to excuse them.

And therefore whatever Pretences necessitous or indigent Persons, or others, who are taken up with any important Business, may have for not observing the Stated Fasts and Festivals of the Church, in the Manner prescribed or expected; yet all Pretences of this Kind are out of Place to them, who have Leisure,

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and are without such urgent and pressing Avocations: Especially to those who complain (tho' one would think it impossible for a *reasonable* Being to make such a Complaint) of Time lying upon their Hands, and their not knowing what to do with themselves; and therefore are forced to seek Relief in vain and idle Amusements, or in sauntring about, or in employing themselves, if the Expression may be allow'd, in doing nothing.

This Charge of not conforming to the Rules of the Church, with respect to the more Publick Times of Devotion, falls still the heavier upon such Persons, as she has observ'd a just Moderation in reducing the Number of them, and obliging us only to observe such Days in a more solemn Manner, in the Institution whereof she proceeded upon very pious and reasonable Grounds. Such are all those Days, wherein we commemorate what Jesus Christ has done, and suffer'd, and merited for us; or wherein we praise God in his Saints; or rejoyce before him, for any signal and publick Mercies we have receiv'd; or humble our selves for any Crying and National Sin, we or our Fathers have been guilty of.

'Tis evident then, that the Church has Power to appoint Days of Religious Solemnity; and that such Appointments ought to be duly regarded, is evident not only from what has been said, but particularly from the Example of Christ, who observ'd the Feast of the Dedication among the *Jews*, tho' 'twas merely an Institution of Human Prudence.

The great Difficulty to be considered is, how far those Reasons, upon which the *Jewish* Sabbath in particular was instituted, may be suppos'd to affect us Christians. And,

1*st*, It appears Matter of Moral Obligation, that there should be some Day set a-part more peculiarly devoted to the Honour and Worship of Almighty God, wherein we are to acknowledge him as the Supreme

preme Lord, and Dread Sovereign of the World; to offer up our Prayers to him; to render Thanks for the great Benefits we have receiv'd at his Hands, and to shew forth his most worthy Praise.

2. It appears no less reasonable, that the Returns of such a Day should be so frequent, as to keep up a constant Sense of Religion, and their Duty to God, in the Minds of Men, without interfering with the necessary Affairs of Human Life, or rendring Men, by too great Intermission of their proper Employments, uncapable of providing for the ordinary Supports of it. But then,

3. It must be granted somewhat difficult to determine this Matter exactly from any Principle of Natural Reason: It not clearly discovering, what Proportion of our Time we are obliged to set a-part for the more Solemn Worship of God; or why one Day in Seven, rather than Six or Eight, should be observed to this End. For tho' the most Ancient of the *Greek* Poets make mention of the Seventh Day, as Sacred to Religion; yet this might proceed either from some Traditionary Account among them of the *Mosaic* History of the Creation, or rather, as seems more probable, from the Order and Number of the Planets. If we only put the Question to our own Reason, concerning the Designation of one Day more than another to be kept Holy to the Lord, it appears to give us no clear or distinct Answer.

So that supposing Men in a pure State of Nature, they are oblig'd with respect to the more solemn Times of Religious Worship, to observe the Rules of the Society where they live. And the Authority which appoints such Times, is to govern it self by those Maxims of Piety and Prudence, which most visibly tend to answer the Design of their Appointment. And this, I conceive, is as far as the mere Light of Natural Reason can direct Men in this Point.

But

But the Case seems to be different with respect to us Christians. For tho' we are not obliged, as I shall shew more particularly afterwards, to observe the Seventh Day, which was commanded the *Jews* to be kept Holy; yet I conceive we are oblig'd, tho' we had not Apostolical Practice for it, to observe one Day in Seven, as more especially Sacred to God. For where Reason dictates any Rule in general to us, but leaves us uncertain as to the Measures and Circumstances of it, there it appears we cannot take a better or wiser Method, than to regulate our selves by the positive Institutions of God, when they come to be known to us.

'Tis reasonable, for Instance, in the Nature of the Thing consider'd in general, that those who more immediately devote themselves to the Service of God, by entring into the Ministry, and are thereby render'd incapable of following any Secular Employment, should have a decent Maintenance allow'd them for their Support; without which indeed 'twill be impossible for them to support their Character, or command the Respect due to it. The Question is, how much may be reasonably suppos'd a proper Competency to this End, and in what Manner it ought to be paid? One Man may be of Opinion, That 'tis most convenient for the State to assign, at the Discretion of it, a certain *Salary*, for those that minister in Things pertaining to God. Another, out of his great Honour and good Wishes to the Sacred Order, may think, that they ought to go upon the Parish, or put themselves wholly on the Benevolence of the People committed to their Charge. A Third may contend, That 'tis more proper and agreeable to the Nature of their Office, that the Clergy should have a certain Proportion of the Fruits of the Earth appointed them; and that this seems, considering their special Relation to him, one of the most significant Methods we can take of *rendring to God the Things that are God's.*

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Yet this way, I am afraid, will not eaſily be made out from any clear or evident Principle of natural Reaſon, to the Conviction of all Men; much leſs will the natural Right of Tythes be eſtabliſh'd on the common and trifling Obſervation, if after all there be any Truth in it, which is made on every Tenth Wave. Under theſe Uncertainties therefore, where a Proportion for thoſe that exerciſe the Holy Function is to be aſſign'd, but we have no Rule to direct us particularly, what that Proportion muſt be; how can we better come to a Reſolution, than by obſerving what Proportion the Wiſdom of God himſelf appointed, under former Diſpenſations? In other Caſes, we hear much Talk of Precedents, and where the Matter in Queſtion appears doubtful, very ill ones are ſometimes call'd for, and pleaded with Succeſs: But certainly, where the All-wiſe God has made us a Precedent, we ought not without very clear and evident Reaſons to depart from it.

So that ſhould I upon this Occaſion affirm, that the Law of Tythes is as Obligatory to Chriſtians, as that of keeping one Day in Seven Holy to God, the Aſſertion might eaſier perhaps be ſaid to be bold, than proved to be falſe. For,

4. The Reaſon why we now obſerve one Day in Seven, is not by vertue of any poſitive or direct Precept in the Fourth Commandment, but of a Moral and Pious *Application* of it: Did that Commandment oblige us in the ſtrict and literal Senſe, we ought to obſerve the very Day Holy, which is there enjoin'd. But that we are under no ſuch Obligation, appears from hence, that the Reaſons, as we may obſerve from what has been ſaid, upon which the *Jewiſh* Sabbath was inſtituted, had a peculiar Reſpect to the State and Condition of the *Jews*, particularly from their Inclination to Idolatry, and the Nature of that Diſpenſation, under which they liv'd, the Promiſes whereof chiefly relating to Temporal Bleſſings and

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Enjoyments, 'twas very proper that God ſhould be more eſpecially worſhipp'd by that People, under the Notion of a Creator.

But the Covenant we are enter'd into, as Chriſtians, being eſtabliſh'd upon better Promiſes, and putting us in a Capacity of a greater Happineſs, than that to which we were *at firſt created* in a Terreſtrial Paradiſe; and God having more eminently confirm'd and *aſſur'd* this Covenant, in that he raiſed Chriſt from the Dead: For theſe Reaſons, I ſay, the Day of God's Publick Worſhip, which was commanded the *Jews* in Memory of the Creation, was very juſtly transferr'd to the Day of our Lord's Reſurrection: That Glorious Day of his Victories, wherein he overcame Death, and open'd unto us the Gate of Everlaſting Life; wherein he reſted from all the Labours of his Love towards us, and finiſh'd the great Work of our Redemption, which his Father had given him to do. *This is the Day, which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.* Thus it appears, that the Lord's Day ought to have ſuperſeded the *Jewiſh* Sabbath. This is the Reaſon, which *Athanaſius* gives in his Treatiſe of the Sabbath, for the Abrogation of it, and of the Lord's Day ſucceeding in its ſtead; that, "as the former was the End of the Firſt "Creation, ſo the Day of Chriſt's Reſurrection was "the Beginning of the Second.

What I have ſaid, is upon Suppoſition, that the *Jewiſh* Sabbath was really the Seventh Day in order from the Creation; *that Moſes* did not mention it in the Firſt of *Geneſis* by way of Anticipation; *that* the Patriarchs before and after the Flood, which yet there are not the leaſt Footſteps of, religiouſly obſerv'd it; and laſtly, *that* the Day upon which Mannah fell, and from which the *Jews* computed their Firſt Sabbath, was the ſame with the Firſt Day of the Creation. All which things are very precarious, and full of Uncertainty; nay, as to ſome of them, there

are very ſtrong Preſumptions to the contrary; and yet, admitting that all theſe Particulars could be clearly and evidently made out, it would not therefore follow, that the *Jewiſh* Sabbath is of Moral and Perpetual Obligation to us Chriſtians; but we ſhould notwithſtanding diſcover, for the Reaſons which have been mention'd, that the Church, in the Change of the Day, proceeded upon very weighty and good Reaſons. As to the Command given the *Jews*, to keep the Sabbath in Memory of their Deliverance out of *Egypt*, this, inſtead of being an Argument for the Continuance of it, proves directly for its Abolition: As it was plainly in this reſpect, a Type of our Deliverance from the worſt and greateſt Enemies, our Sins, and therefore to be number'd among thoſe other Shadows of *good Things* to come, which were *to be done away in Chriſt*.

Having ſpoken at large to what I propos'd, and particularly repreſented to you the Obligation we are under to a Religious Obſervation of the *Lord's Day*, I ſhall conclude with ſhewing, in Two or Three uſeful Directions, how and in what Manner it ought to be obſerv'd. And,

1. We are to conſider, the *Lord's Day* is a Time ſet a-part for the more Publick Worſhip and Service of God, wherein we are to do him Honour, and *praiſe him according to his Excellent Greatneſs*. For Honour and Praiſe are moſt properly and ſignificantly expreſs'd, by outward and open Teſtimonies of our Eſteem. When *Ahauſuerus* put the Queſtion to *Haman*, *What ſhall be done to the Man, whom the King delighteth to honour? Haman* ſuppoſing himſelf the Perſon to whom the King deſign'd this diſtinguiſhing Favour; *Let the Royal Apparel*, ſays he, *be brought forth, and the Horſe upon which the King is wont to ride, and bring him on Horſe-back through the Streets of the City, and proclaim before him, Thus ſhall it be done to the Man whom the King delighteth to honour*, Eſther 6. 6.

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In vain we pretend to have any true Honour for God or Religion, while we neglect the *Publick* Duties we owe to them. Holy *David*'s Notion of honouring God, was exactly agreeable to what I here observe. In how moving and affectionate a Manner does he expreſs his own Zeal for the Publick Worſhip, and call upon us to follow him in the Motion of it? *Lord, I have loved the Habitation of thine Houſe, the Place where thine* Honour *dwelleth. O, Come, let us go unto the Houſe of the Lord, let us worſhip and* magnify *his Name together. Let us come before his Preſence with Thankſgiving, let us praiſe him in the* Congregation *of his Saints.*

But where is the Zeal, where is the Piety of Chriſtians? when they deſire to be excus'd from attending God's Publick Worſhip, upon ſuch ſlight and frivolous Pretences, as would not, upon a Requeſt or Invitation from a Friend, be admitted in Point of common Decency and Reſpect.

Where is the Zeal and Piety of the Primitive Chriſtians, who could not be induc'd to forſake the Aſſemblies of the Saints, tho' they repair'd to them with the apparent Danger and Hazard of their Lives? But now that our Church-Doors are open, and not only the Laws of God require, but are enforc'd by Human Authority, (ſo far as is conſiſtent with Human Freedom, and the Deſign of Religion) to compel Men to come in, *that God's houſe may be full*; yet how ineffectual ſometimes are all our Intreaties and Applications to this End?

I bleſs God, my Brethren, I have no Reaſon to complain of you, as the *moſt* negligent in the Duty I would here recommend, of a conſtant Attendance on the publick Worſhip of God, eſpecially on the *Lord's Day*: Yet I have had ſometimes too juſt Occaſion to ſpeak to this Point; and I will never leave ſpeaking to it, till, by the Grace of God, I have gain'd it. But,

2. We ought also on the Lord's-Day to employ our selves constantly in the private Exercises of Religion; in conversing with God by Prayer and Meditation; in reading good Books, and examining into the State of our Souls, and forming good Resolutions for our future Conduct. Yet I do not hereby intend, that we should tye our selves so strictly up to a Course of Devotion on the Lord's Day, as to be continually upon our Knees, or in our Closet, or with a Book in our Hands: No, the Defects of our Capacity are such, that if the Mind be too long bent upon one thing, 'twill lose its Spring and Activity; and therefore such innocent Respites from our Devotion, whereby the Mind is not too much dissipated, nor any just Occasion of Scandal or Offence given to others, is not only lawful, but highly convenient, in order to qualify us for a more cheerful Performance of our Duty afterwards, and to give us a more sensible Delight in it.

3. As the Lord's Day is a Day of Thanksgiving for the Publick or Private Mercies we have receiv'd from God, 'tis a proper Exercise of it to perform Acts of Mercy and Charity to others, and both with respect to their Souls and Bodies: To their Souls, by teaching them the Fear of the Lord, by instructing, by advising, and admonishing them; especially such of them as are under our more immediate Charge and Direction. Tho' this indeed is not to be consider'd barely as an Act of Charity, but as Matter of strict and indispensible Duty, which Parents and Masters of Families can by no means excuse themselves in the Breach or Omission of.

But I would on this Publick Day of Joy and Thanksgiving to God for his manifold Mercies, recommend to you also Acts of Mercy and Benevolence to the Poor. Those that do not want Inclination, cannot want Opportunities of conveying their Charity in some decent Manner to proper Objects of it.

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The Rich particularly, whose Tables are full and plenteous, are under Circumstances, I had almost said under Temptations of contributing to the Relief of their indigent Neighbours, which they cannot easily overcome. A small Portion out of their Abundance, may afford a very comfortable Refreshment to a whole Family, or perhaps to more than one. And if Alms be a Sacrifice at all times well-pleasing to God, we may piously hope, that they will ascend up as a more grateful *Memorial* before him, in Conjunction with our Publick and Private Prayers. It seems a very proper and acceptable Occasion to God of doing good, at a time, when the whole Church unites in praising him for *his Goodness*, and declaring the Wonders that he doth for the Children of Men.

4*thly*, As the Lord's-Day is a Day devoted to the Service of God and Religion, let us take Care to sanctify it by a Godly and Religious Conversation. The Rule of the Apostle, *Let no corrupt Communication come out of your Mouth, but such as may tend to the Use of edifying*, ought to be more carefully observed on a Solemnity, one great End in the Institution whereof was to free us from the Corruption, which is in the World, thro' Lust, and to promote universal Piety and Happiness. I do not hereby intend, that 'tis not incumbent on us at all Times, and in all our Discourses, to keep with great Strictness and Nicety to the Rules of our Holy Religion, so as never to offend by any *idle Word*, or Levity of Expression, against them: But my Meaning is, that if we would sanctify this Holy Day as we ought, and agreeably to the End of its Institution, we should not only avoid all Occasion of Offence, by a loose or prophane Conversation, but endeavour to promote the Sanctification of others, by making one proper and useful Truth of Religion, or other, the Subject of our Discourses.

And indeed, if the Discourses of Men, as our *Saviour* himself has observ'd, naturally run upon what

they have most at Heart, 'tis at a time when we profess our selves to be more entirely devoted to the Service of Religion, both a great Indecency, and an Argument of much Indifferency to it, to give our Tongues any idle, irreligious, or prophane Liberty.

As we would therefore give any reasonable Evidence to our selves or others, that in observing this Day the Meditations of our Hearts are right, and acceptable to God, let us take Care that the Words of our Mouth be so too. Let us refrain all such Subjects especially, as may discover any Worldly-mindedness or Impurity of Thought, which are so contrary to the Spirit of Sanctification, and all the Motions of it. *All Uncleanness*, therefore, *or Covetousness, let it not be once named among us, as becometh Saints. Neither Filthiness, nor foolish Talking nor Jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of Thanks*, Eph. 5. 4. I shall only add upon this Point, that other Direction of the same Apostle, so pertinent to the Duty and Sacredness of the Day, though spoken in general: *Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all Wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*, Col. 3. 16.

5*thly*, and Lastly, That we may better attend these Duties, we must not only intermit our ordinary Labours and Employments, but take off our Thoughts, as much as possible, from the Business of them. 'Tis true, we are not bound to the Rigor of the *Jewish* Sabbath, but only, as I said, to the *Moral* Equity of it. And certainly, 'tis reasonable in the Nature of the thing, that the Day, wherein God Almighty has more especially requir'd us to serve him, should be appropriated to his *Service:* But yet in particular Cases, where Charity or any extraordinary Accident requires, that we should apply our selves to some more servile Work; here God will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice. And there was under the *Jewish* Dispensation it self, as well as by the express Determination

nation of our Lord in the Gospel, an equitable Allowance granted, as to such Cases. What I would caution you against, is the pretending such Cases to justify any servile Employment on this Sacred Day, where there is really no Ground for such a Pretence, and to exhort you withal, that you would consider it, not only as a Duty, but a *Privilege*, to have a Day set a-part for the Worship of God, wherein you have nothing to do, but to serve him with a *quiet* Mind, free from all worldly Cares and Distractions, and wholly taken up with the Spiritual Exercises and Delights of Religion.

SERMON VI.

Of the ſtated Places of God's Worſhip, and in what Manner our Reverence towards them ought to be expreſs'd.

LEV. XXVI. 2.

Ye ſhall keep my Sabbaths, and reverence my Sanctuary; I am the Lord.

THIS equally agreeable to the Principles of Natural Religion, that there ſhould be Stated Times, and Appropriate Places, for the Publick Worſhip of God. I have already conſider'd in the former Diſcourſe, how far the Poſitive Inſtitutions of God to the *Jews*, with reſpect to the *Sabbaths*, are of Natural Obligation. I am now to conſider, how far they are obligatory with reſpect to Places more immediately ſet apart or dedicated to his Service. So that I ſhall wholly apply my ſelf at preſent to diſcourſe of theſe Words, *And reverence my Sanctuary.*

In the Proſecution of which Enquiry, I ſhall ſhew,

Firſt, That the Reaſons of Appropriating Places to the Publick Worſhip of God, are the ſame in general

neral under the Christian, as under the *Mosaick* Dispensation.

Secondly, That Places so appropriated have a Relative Holiness in them, and ought therefore to be *reverenced*.

Thirdly, That Reason further discovers to us, how, and in what Instances, our Reverence towards such Places ought to be expressed.

First, That the Reasons of Appropriating Places to the Publick Worship of God, are the same in general under the Christian, as under the *Mosaick* Dispensation.

One End of God's appointing the Tabernacle, and afterwards the Temple, was, to possess the Minds of the *Jews* with more devout and inflam'd Affections in their Religious Addresses to him. The Place we are in, naturally puts us in mind of the proper Business and Design of it. And Places of Religious Worship being design'd to this End, that we should pay our Homage to the Great and Eternal God in them; our very Entrance into such Places, if we consider where we are, and for what End we repair to them, cannot but inspire us with a more awful Sense of our Duty, and the Divine Majesty, before whom we present our selves.

If when we do but approach the Palaces, or go into the splendid Apartments of the Great, tho' of mortal and great Sinners, the Imagination is so apt to bow and prostrate it self before them, and we so easily discover the inward Sentiments of the Mind, by a suitable Aspect or Behaviour; with how great Care and Caution should we *keep our Feet, when we go to the House of God*; and with what profound Veneration both of all the Powers of our Soul, and proper Motions of the Body, ought we to appear in it?

These are Reasons for instituting Publick Places for the Worship of God, which flow from the present

State

State and Condition of Human Nature, and therefore could not be peculiar to the *Jewiſh* People; eſpecially if we conſider.

2. Tis a Principle highly agreeable to the natural Notions of Mankind, that God is in a *ſpecial* Manner preſent in ſuch Places, not only as they are conſecrated to him, and he has thereby a ſpecial Propriety in them, but alſo by Reaſon of the united Prayers, which are therein put up to him, and which are reaſonably preſum'd to be of more Force and Efficacy, than thoſe of ſingle Perſons, to bring down the real and ſenſible Effects of his Preſence, with the Bleſſings pray'd for.

David therefore ſpoke agreeably to the general Senſe and Reaſon of Mankind upon this Article, when he ſaid, *We wait for thy Loving-Kindneſs, O God, in the midſt of thy Temple.* And our Bleſſed Lord has given a great Confirmation to this pious Sentiment, in declaring, that *where Two or Three are gathered together in his Name, there he is in the midſt of them.* It ſeems indeed to have been a common Notion of the *Jews*, as we conclude from the 8th Chapter of the Firſt of *Kings*, v. 48. from the Example of *Hezekiah*, *Iſa.* 38. 2. of *Daniel*, chap. 6. 10. and of *Jonah*, chap. 2. 4. that even private Worſhip was to be directed towards the Temple: Nay, the Words of *Jonah* at the 7th Verſe imply, as if the *Jews* thought God would not hear the Prayers which were privately addreſs'd to him in Heaven, except they firſt paſs'd through the Temple, the ſpecial Place of his Reſidence here upon Earth. *When my Soul fainted within me*, ſays that Prophet, *I remember'd the Lord, and my Prayer came unto thee, into thy Holy Temple*, v. 7.

And we piouſly conclude from the Reaſons already mention'd, that God is in a ſpecial Manner preſent, by the Effects of his Grace, in our Chriſtian Temples, tho' not in ſo ſenſible a Manner as he diſcover'd himſelf in that of the *Jews*. Some indeed have inferr'd from

from the Words of the Apoſtle, wherein he directs Women to be cover'd in the Religious Aſſemblies, *becauſe of the Angels*, 1 Cor. 11. 10. that God may be ſaid to be more eminently preſent in them, by the Miniſtry of theſe Bleſſed and Glorious Spirits. Whether this Interpretation be exactly agreeable to the Deſign of the Apoſtle in this place, has, I know, been controverted; it ſeems nevertheleſs (conſider'd in it ſelf) to be highly reaſonable. For if the Holy Angels *are ſent forth by God*, on any Occaſion, *to miniſter unto them who ſhall be Heirs of Salvation*; there are good Grounds to believe, that they will more particularly attend us, and execute the Orders of God, at a Time when we are employ'd in their own Work, of Praiſing and Glorifying him, and in the Uſe of thoſe Ordinances, which he has appointed as the ſpecial Means of promoting our *Salvation*. But,

3. The common Notions we have of Order and Decency require, that the Place deſign'd for God's more immediate Service, ſhould be appropriated to Him, and to Him only. *Of Order*; that Men may know where to repair on all Occaſions to worſhip God; and *of Decency*, becauſe 'tis contrary to all the Rules of it, and indeed to the ordinary Acceptation of Holineſs throughout the Scriptures, that what is *common or unclean*, ſhould be indifferently or promiſcuouſly us'd, with Things ſet apart for Holy and Religious Uſes. 'Tis upon this receiv'd Notion of Decency, the Apoſtle puts the Queſtion to the *Corinthians*, and in a manner which ſhews how provoking the Diſorder and Prophanation were, which he charg'd them with being guilty of, in the Place they aſſembled in for Religious Worſhip. *What! have ye not Houſes to eat or to drink in; or deſpiſe ye the Church of God?* 1 Cor. 11. 22.

One would think it unneceſſary to inſiſt upon ſuch plain and evident Truths, were it not for the weak

and

and foolish Prejudice some People are under; as if Reveal'd Religion destroy'd the common Principles of Natural Reason; and we were bound to observe or do nothing, but what we have an express Command for in the Gospel.

I call this a weak and foolish Prejudice, because whatever is Matter of natural or moral Obligation, certainly obliges Christians, tho' they have no positive Command for it. So far as we pay to God a *reasonable Service*, or act agreeably to the general Rules of Decency and Order in the New Testament, we obey the Commands, and serve the Designs of God, as much as if we had a particular Direction from him for what we do. God has thought fit for the most part to give Christians only general Rules for the Discipline to be observed in his Church, for the Order of his Worship, and the Government of their Lives; without descending to state the particular Cases and Measures of our Duty in each respect. For to have done this, would have swell'd the Body of his Laws to so great a Bulk, and fill'd it with so many nice and curious Speculations, that few People would have had either Leisure or Capacity, or perhaps Inclination, for going thro' so difficult a Work.

Whereas if we be piously disposed and sincerely desire to do the Will of God in all Things, tho' we have not an express Rule to direct us at every Turn what we are to do; yet 'tis but putting the Question to our own Hearts, what is most fit and reasonable to be done, and most agreeable to those general Rules of honouring God, and doing all to his Glory, and we cannot easily mistake in the Application. But I proceed to my Second Proposition,

2. That Places so appropriated, have a Relative Holiness in them, and ought therefore to be reverenc'd. This is the Notion, as was intimated before, of Holiness, with respect to Things, and Persons, and

and Times, as well as Places design'd for the Service of God, in the Old Testament, that they were separated from Common and Ordinary Uses, to his Own? And if for this very Reason they were accounted Sacred then, what imaginable Pretence can there be, that the same Reason should not render them, and *All* of them, Sacred now?

If it be pretended, that the Temple was accounted holy, by Reason of the Legal Sacrifices which were offered to God in it; we ask why the Christian Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving in our Churches should not be a sufficient Ground for reputing them Holy also? But above all, why that Place should not be reputed in a more eminent Manner holy, where in so solemn a Manner and so Divine an Office, we commemorate the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, which the Legal Sacrifices were but Types of, and without respect to which, they were of no Consideration or Acceptance with God.

And we think it a very decent and pious Custom, that a Place where so great a Mystery of our Holy Religion, which gives us a nearer Accession to God, and entitles us to so many Blessings, is celebrated, should be distinguish'd by all proper Expressions of our Piety and Reverence.

If it be said, That there were, as has been acknowledg'd before, sensible Effects of God's Presence in the Temple, upon which it had a peculiar Relation of Holiness to him: We answer, That God, as to the Spiritual and Gracious Effects of his Presence, and wherein he manifests it in the most beneficial and excellent manner, is present in our Christian Temples. Otherwise indeed, which ought not to be admitted, the *Jewish* Worship had been superior in its Privileges to the Christian, with respect to the greatest and most sublime Benefits of Religion.

If it be said further, That the Temple was built by the special Command of God, and upon that Account

count a certain Holineſs was aſcribed to it; whereas we have no ſuch Command for Building any Places purely for God's Worſhip now: 'Tis anſwer'd again, That the Deſign of *David*'s building a Temple, and *Solomon*'s going on with it, do not appear to have proceeded from any poſitive and direct Command of God. God, 'tis true, gave particular Directions about building the Temple, but it does not therefore follow, that the deſign of Building it was not antecedently laid by theſe Princes upon natural Motives of Piety and Religion; the ſame Motives upon which the Patriarchs erected Sanctuaries or ſeparate Places of Worſhip to God, before any poſitive Inſtitution to this End.

So that ſuppoſing God Almighty immediately inſpir'd *David* with ſuch a Deſign, and *Solomon* with the Charge of executing it, yet this does not argue but that the Deſign was pious and reaſonable in it ſelf; and where any thing is ſo, and evidently appears to be ſo, a new and Evangelical Precept for it is not neceſſary.

But are there not two Paſſages in the New Teſtament, which ſeem directly to overthrow all that has been ſaid on this Head, and to confirm what Mr. *Perkins* has advanc'd in his Caſes of Conſcience, with equal Piety and Diſcretion? "That all Places are holy and alike, ſince the coming of Chriſt; the Houſe "or the *Field* is as Holy as the Church.

The firſt Paſſage I referr'd to, is that of St. *Stephen*, *Howbeit the moſt High dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands*, Acts 7. 48. Theſe Words have been equally alledg'd againſt the proper and ſtated Places of God's Worſhip, and the decent Ornaments of them.

They have been indifferently made uſe of to demoliſh our Churches, and deface our Altars; and ſerved in the times of the Grand Rebellion, at once as an Argument for Plunder, and for Fanatick Zeal. 'Twas no extraordinary thing in thoſe Days, for Men gravely to rob Churches in the Name of the Lord, and to

convert

convert the Tabernacles of the Prince of Peace, in a literal Sense, into Fortresses of War.

But to explain to you the true Sense of these Words, they are directed by the Holy Martyr to the *Jews*; and his principal Design in them is to shew, that tho' the Temple was built by the special Order and Direction of God; yet they were not to suppose that the Effects of his Favour or more special Presence were solely confin'd to it, but that now under the Gospel Dispensation, which the *Nations*, as well as the *Jews*, were invited to share in the Privileges of, Publick Places of Worship might be any where indifferently erected to God, and his heavenly Benediction piously expected in them.

And indeed if these Words should prove, that publick and distinct Places of Worship are not now to be erected to God, they would prove contrary to what is confess'd on all Hands, and the Argument of St. *Stephen*, *v.* 46, 47. that *Solomon* ought not to have built God a House; especially since he had the same Sentiment himself, with that I am considering, Thus he expresses it, 2 *Chron.* 6. 18. *But will God in very Deed dwell with Men on the Earth. Behold Heaven and the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee, how much less this House, which I have built.*

Again, if these Words be brought to prove that God is not to be worshipped in any stated Place, because he cannot be contained in it, they will prove that he is no where to be worshipp'd; no, not by the Holy Angels in Heaven it self, because he can be no where circumscrib'd. Or,

Lastly, If it be inferr'd from these Words, that there can be no Holiness in Temples made with Hands, because God does not dwell in them, this Inference also would prove too much, and against an acknowledg'd Truth, that the House *Solomon* built for God, was no more holy, according to the Author I quoted, than

than the Houſes wherein the *Jews* dwelt, or the *Fields* about them.

You will find the other Paſſage, which is commonly objected againſt what I'm aſſerting, and which I proceed to conſider, *Acts* 17. 24. *God*, ſays the Apoſtle, *that made the World and all things therein, ſeeing that he is Lord of Heaven and Earth, dwelleth not in Temples made with Hands.* We have here the very Words with thoſe of St. *Stephen*; only they were ſpoken upon a different Occaſion, and to different Perſons; the Philoſophical Wits and Oracles of that Age, in that famous Seat of Learning, *Athens*. And the Deſign of the Apoſtle was to ſhew them, that the Divine Nature cannot be circumſcribed by Place, or under thoſe Corporeal Repreſentations which they made of their falſe Gods, and wherein they ſuppos'd their Divinity did more immediately reſide. For theſe *Learned Sages* imagin'd (as the *Romans* did particularly with reſpect to the *Palladium*) that the Images of their Gods had a certain Magical Power, of Confining and Tying them up upon the Spot, that they could not eaſily ſtir, or get looſe from it. In Oppoſition to this wild Conceit, St. *Paul* aſſerts that the true God cannot be repreſented by an Image, or limited by Place, but is preſent in every Place. This is all the Apoſtle deſign'd to aſſert; and therefore it cannot be inferr'd from his Words, that God does not manifeſt the Effects of his Preſence in ſome Places more than others, and eſpecially ſuch Holy Places as are more immediately dedicated to and ſet apart for his publick Worſhip. Had this been the Scope of the Apoſtle's Argument, he muſt have argued contrary to known Fact, in relation to thoſe ſpecial and ſignal Manifeſtations God was pleaſed to make of his Preſence, in the Temple of *Solomon*.

I ſhall add but one Conſideration more, to ſhew that Places ſet apart for Divine Worſhip ought to be regarded, as having a relative Holineſs in them. And

'tis

'tis this; That the very Persons who oppose so evident a Truth, must be forc'd to acknowledge it upon their own Principles. 'Tis granted by them particularly, that the Lord's Day is to be consider'd and observ'd as Holy; this is the Term wherein they ordinarily speak of it; or at least wherein they will not scruple to speak of it: Yet this Day cannot be term'd Holy on any other Account, than because of its Relative Holiness. 'Tis a Time distinguish'd and separated from the common Offices and Employments of Human Life, to the Special Service of God; and 'tis in this Distinction, or separate Use, that all the Holiness of it consists. Why then, for the same Consideration, are not *Places* separated for Holy and Religious Uses, to be esteem'd Holy? Where the Reasons of a Relative Holiness appear equal on both Sides, what should cast them on one Side, more than on the other?

Shall I now shew, that our Christian Churches, or Places separated for God's Publick Worship, which I have prov'd to be *Sanctuaries* in a proper Sense, ought therefore to be *reverenced*; this is a Consequence which flows so naturally, or rather indeed necessarily from what has been said, that I need not say much to illustrate it. I shall only observe, that we are agreed in other Cases to set a Value on Things or Persons, not in Consideration of their absolute and real Worth, but of their relative Use or Character. An Insect is consider'd in it self as a living Creature, more valuable than the brightest or richest Jewel in the World: But we should think him very weak, who would for that Reason prefer a Butterfly to a Diamond; which, by common Consent and Agreement, serves him to so many more advantageous and useful Ends.

For the same Reason, with respect to the different Characters of Men, or any Special Relation they bear to God, to the Prince, or to our selves, we give

them, or ought to give them, different and ſuitable Teſtimonies of our Eſteem or Affection. Nay, when we truly honour or love any Perſon, we naturally expreſs a Value for every thing that nearly belongs to him, or wherein he has a particular Intereſt.

Certainly then, nothing can be more reaſonable, than that upon Account of the Special Propriety God has in Places ſet apart for his Service, and for ſo many Holy Ends and Uſes, we ſhould expreſs our Reverence toward ſuch Places, by all proper and becoming Teſtimonies of it.

'Twas a juſt Senſe of what we owe to this Natural Inſtance of Piety, that when our Saviour obſerv'd only an Outer-Court of the *Temple* prophan'd by the proper Buſineſs of an *Exchange*; tho' the Traffick carry'd on in it, was about thoſe very Things which were deſign'd for the Service of the Temple; yet he expreſs'd his Reſentment againſt ſuch Prophanation in ſo ſenſible a manner, that he never ſeems throughout the whole Courſe of his Life to have been tranſported to the like Degree, beyond the great Lenity and Sedateneſs of his Temper.

'Twas upon this Natural Principle, of the Reverence due to Places appropriated to the Worſhip of God, that *Antiochus* was fill'd with ſo great Horror of Mind, for his invading and pillaging the Temple: 'Twas a Senſe of this Prophanation, which made him complain that the Sleep was gone from his Eyes, that his Heart fail'd him, and that all his Misfortunes were fall'n upon him. *But now I remember*, ſays he, *the Evils I did at Jeruſalem; how I took all the Veſſels of Gold and Silver that were therein.—— I perceive therefore, that for this Cauſe theſe Evils are come upon me*, 1 Mac. 6. 12, 13. I ſhall take Occaſion, from this Inſtance, of a Tranſition to my next and laſt Head,

3*dly*, To ſhew, That even Natural Reaſon diſcovers further to us, how, and in what Particulars, our Reve-

Reverence towards such Places ought to be expres'd. And that,

1. By a constant Attendance, on all proper Occasions, at them.

2. By a Compos'd, Devout, and Regular Behaviour in them. And,

3. By our Liberal Contributions, when they are call'd for, to what may be thought necessary towards the proper Ornaments of them, or the greater Solemnity of the Publick Worship, for which they are appointed.

I shall only premise, before I go upon these Particulars, if such a Premonition may be necessary to prevent any Mistakes, that the Reverence we contend for as due to our Christian Sanctuaries, is not suppos'd to terminate in them, or to be directed, (except in an improper Sense) to them, but to the Honour of God; which is properly and significantly promoted, by the outward Expressions of our Esteem for such Things, as more immediately pertain or *relate* to him.

Thus particularly with respect to our Bowing towards the Altar; Nothing but the last Degree of Prejudice will suppose, that the Altar is the direct and primary Object of the Reverence we express by Bowing. No; this is only a significant Action, whereby we testify or acknowledge, that the Place towards which we bow, is the Place where the most Sacred and Solemn Rites of our Christian Worship are perform'd; and where Christ, in the Holy Sacrament, more eminently dispenses the Means of his Grace, and in a visible Manner.

Now 'tis impossible to conceive, why we may not express our Sentiments by our Actions, where they are known to be expressive of them, as well as by

our Words. Thoſe that charge us with this pious and decent Cuſtom as ſuperſtitious, would do well to ſhew us any tolerable Reaſon, why there is more Superſtition in Bowing down the Head towards the Altar, than in Turning up, which I ſuppoſe they will not diſallow, the Eye towards Heaven.

A certain Sect among us appears to have been ſo ſenſible that the Charge of Superſtition lies equally in both theſe Caſes, (that is, in Truth, againſt neither) that to avoid all Imputation of it, they think it a ſafer way in their Publick Worſhip, to draw a *broad* Veil over their Eyes, or to fix them with an unparallel'd motionleſs Gravity upon the Earth. A Poſture, which at the bottom is not perhaps without its proper *Signification* neither. But,

1. We are to reverence God's Sanctuary, by conſtantly repairing on all proper Occaſions to it. For the great End of Dedicating it to his Service, was, That by our *united* Prayers and Addreſſes to him, we might be more inſtrumental in promoting his Honour and Glory, and our own Salvation. And indeed, the very Method whereby we do God Honour, and glorify his Holy Name, highly and directly conduces to our Spiritual Advantage. The more Hands there are to the Heavenly Petitions we put up to him, the more reaſonable and aſſur'd are our Expectations of being favourably heard.

Now I have obſerv'd in the former Diſcourſe, that Honour or Glory, in a proper Signification, imports ſomething done in a more publick manner to the Advantage of the Perſon whoſe Praiſes we celebrate. This is agreeable to the Scripture-Notion of Glorifying God. We are to this End commanded by our Saviour, to let our *Light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee our good works*, Matt. 5. 16. And again he

he tells, *Joh.* 15. 8. *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.* To which I shall add the Words of the *Psalmist*, as they immediately respect the Publick Service of God: *All nations whom thou hast made, shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall* glorify *thy name*, Psal. 86. 9.

And 'tis for this Reason, that the Temple wherein God was publickly worshipped, is call'd *the House of his Glory*, and not only from the more Glorious Manifestations of his Presence in it.

What Grounds then can we have to imagine, if our doing Glory to God by our Prayers be a proper Means to recommend them to his Acceptance, that we may pray as acceptably to him, tho' in Time of the Publick Service, at Home, or in our Closets, as in his *Sanctuary?*

This Imagination is not only altogether vain and groundless, but highly impious on several Accounts, which are so obvious, I need not mention them. Tho' indeed, setting aside the Impiety of such a Thought, 'tis highly reasonable in the natural Decency of the Thing, that you should rather wait upon God at his House, where he has appointed and expects to receive you, than that you should expect his Attendance at your own.

I do not hereby intend, that we *ought* not to worship, or *may* not (in a lower Sense) be said to praise God in private; but my Meaning is, that then we do most eminently make his *Praise to be glorious*, when we *praise him in the Congregation of his Saints*; and withal, that the Prayers which are offer'd to him in private, upon our absenting without Cause from his Publick Worship, and as it were in *Opposition* to it, cannot for this Reason be acceptable to him.

Permit me, upon this Occasion, to take Notice of another Instance of Irreverence Men are too commonly guilty of, with respect to God's Publick Worship, and that is, in their coming Late to it, or after

the Service is begun. 'Tis no Uncharitable Presumption, when People are thus slow and backward in repairing to the House of God, that they do not come out of any *true* Motive of Religion, or Zeal for his Honour, but in Compliance with what is customary, and expected by the Neighbourhood from them; or that they may avoid the Imputation of Infidelity, and not be thought to live altogether *without God in the World*, which would be of ill Consequence to them in the Conduct of their *Temporal* Affairs.

This Irregularity in coming late to the Publick Worship, is also inconvenient to others; as it tends to interrupt the Devotion of particular Persons, or sometimes to cause a General Revolution of the Eyes or Thoughts of the Congregation; especially when Way is made for some Great Person or Persons, to advance and distinguish themselves. As if the End of their coming there, were not for Obedience, but Triumph; not to humble themselves before God, but to procure a Sacrifice to their own Pride and Vanity, and show their Superiority above their Fellow-Creatures.

But the Disorders such Persons occasion, do not terminate here. A great deal of Ceremonious Address is to be used, and many Civilities exchang'd, before they can compose themselves, or think it reasonable that others should do so.

Yet I do not here absolutely condemn a transient Respect to other Persons, where any particular Occasion invites to it, even in our Religious Assemblies. But where People look about them, to discover proper Objects to whom they may pay their Regards; here the Opportunity of shewing their good Breeding is certainly very ill chosen; and the more they affect to shew it, the less they must be presum'd to consider, where, and in whose Presence they are.

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This Irregularity of coming late to the Publick Worſhip, diſcovers further a Want of due Reverence to the Rules and Orders of the Church, which ſuppoſes the Congregation *aſſembled and met together* at the beginning of the Service. As our excellent *Liturgy* is deſign'd, and with great Prudence contriv'd in all its Parts to promote Piety, among other Inſtances of its Contrivance to this End, after having opened the Service with a general Exhortation, it immediately proceeds to the general Confeſſion; piouſly intending thereby, that before we preſume to ask any Favour of God, we ought to make an humble Acknowledgment of our Sins and Offences againſt him. But when People come to apply themſelves to the Throne of God's Grace, without any ſuch proper and previous Humiliation, this is adding Preſumption to their Impiety, and giving Cauſe to ſuſpect, that they do not come to offer up their Prayers with the *Publican*, as *Penitents*, but with the *Phariſee*, as Juſt Perſons that *need no Repentance*.

And therefore I might ſhew further, that the Irreverence I am ſpeaking to, gives juſt and general Occaſion of Scandal; and if we are not permitted even innocent and lawful Actions, when we may wound the Conſciences of our weak Brethern thereby; a heavier Load of Guilt muſt certainly lye upon us from a Behaviour *directly* criminal, and which the *Wiſer* and more *Conſcientious* Chriſtians are, the more they will ſtill be offended and *ſcandaliz'd* at.

2*dly*, We are to Reverence God's Sanctuary by a ſerious, devout, and regular Behaviour in it.

By a ſerious and devout Behaviour, I mean ſuch decent Motions or Poſtures of the Body, with ſuch a compoſed Air of the Face, as moſt properly expreſs the inward Sentiments and Attention of the Mind. Corporeal Worſhip is another Article which flows from the Principles of Natural Religion; and

who would imagine that Christians should run into so wild a Degree of Phanaticism, as to oppose so *reasonable* a *Service?* And indeed what can be more reasonable, as our doing Honour and Glory to God imports some external Action; and we have no intuitive Knowledge of one another's Thoughts, than that we should, as the Apostle exhorts, *glorify God in our Bodies, and in our Spirits which are Gods?* that is, who equally created them, and has therefore equally a Right to be serv'd by them, 1 *Cor.* 6. 20. Yet I am sensible these Words of the Apostle, may and ought perhaps strictly, and most agreeably to the Context, be explained in this Sense, "That to preserve "the Body chaste and free from all sinful Impurities, "is an acceptable State of serving God, and where- "by we do Honour to our Holy Religion". Yet when any Text of Scripture is agreeable to the natural Reason of Things, or in its literal Sense tends to confirm it, there, I conceive, we may properly make use of such a Text, by way of Accommodation, tho' in its primary Sense, 'twas otherways intended.

And that outward and corporeal Expressions of our Reverence are reasonable in themselves, appears further from hence: That God has so contriv'd our humane Frame, and the Union of those two different Substances whereof we are compos'd, that the Motions of the Body naturally follow those of the Soul. Nay, these two Substances often act reciprocally upon one another.

All Persons may observe this; when they are under the Power of any Passion, wherewith the Body is more violently shaken, the Soul receives in its turn a fresh Concussion, and as it were by way of Rebound; and the Force of that Passion is thereby sensibly augmented.

Why then should not the Passion of Love, and Fear, and Admiration in the Worship of God, when the Powers of the Soul are suppos'd to be most of all ex-

excited, from the Importance of our Duty, and the Excellency of its Object; why, I say, should not these Passions, on so moving an Occasion, be raised still higher and higher, according to the same admirable, but inexplicable Laws of Union, whereby these two Substances act upon, and mutually *impell* one another; so that the devout Affections of the Mind may discover themselves in devout Postures of the Body, and the Attention of it in some measure at least be awakened, and kept up by them?

This is an Argument which shews, that Corporeal Worship or Reverence in the Service of God is not only founded on Natural Principles, but that if our Minds be devoutly dispos'd, we cannot, without offering a great and sensible Violence to Nature, neglect to perform it.

But what Account then shall we give of those Words of our Saviour to the Woman of *Samaria*, *John* 4. 21. *The Hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this Mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father: but the true Worshippers shall worship the Father* in Spirit and in Truth; *for the Father seeketh* such *to worship him. God is a* Spirit, *and they that worship him* must *worship him in Spirit and in Truth.*

There are some I know, who have inferr'd from these Words, That as God is of a Nature purely spiritual, our Worship of him ought to be so too: That the Force of our Saviour's Argument lies in this; and therefore, so we do but worship God in the Purity and Simplicity of our Hearts, 'tis unnecessary and superstitious, to say no worse, to concern our selves about the external Acts of our Behaviour.

This Interpretation of the Words may appear at the first View plausible; yet 'tis evident, if we consider them a little farther, that our Lord is here recommending to us a holy and religious Frame of Spirit in our Prayers and Addresses to God, not in Opposition to proper and outward Expressions of Reverence, but

but to the Legal Rites and Ceremonies of the *Jewish* Religion, which restrain'd the more solemn and pompous Worship of God to one certain Place. Our Lord, I say, here declares that the Ceremonial Ordinances, which chiefly gave Directions about the Temple-worship, were now upon the Point of being abrogated, and that publick Places of Worship might be indifferently erected to God in all Parts of the World.

Besides, 'tis usual in Scripture to express those Things absolutely, which are only to be understood comparatively: As when God says by the Prophet, *Hos. 6. 6. I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice:* The Meaning is, (for Sacrifice was of his own Appointment,) That he will principally, or in the first Place, have Mercy. And so again, 1 *John* 3. 18. *Let us not*, says the Apostle, *love in Word, or in Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth.* But certainly it cannot be his Design in these Words, to condemn the proper Expressions of mutual Kindness and Civility to one another in Conversation, but only to give the Preference to kind and beneficent Actions.

So here, when our Saviour tells us, That *God is a Spirit*, and they that Worship him, must *worship him in Spirit and in Truth:* What he intends, is, That a pious and devout Temper of Mind, is the most acceptable and generous Principle of Religion; and this Preference we allow in the highest Degree to the inward und spiritual Worship: But that our Saviour by no means intends to exclude the outward Significations of it, in decent and bodily Gestures, appears further from hence;

That if Corporeal Worship be absolutely for this Reason unlawful and superstitious, that *God is a Spirit*, &c. then the Worship practis'd by the best of Men before the Law, by the Command of God under it, and by the Apostles after it, *Acts* 20. 36. was superstitious too. 'Twill consequently follow, that

the

the Author of the *Revelations* has deſcrib'd the Worſhip of the holy Angels themſelves in Heaven after a manner, which may give reaſonable Cauſe of Offence: For he repreſents theſe bleſſed Spirits as worſhipping God, *by caſting down their Crowns before his Throne, and falling on their Faces*, Ch. 4. 10, and 11. 16. 'Tis granted, theſe Expreſſions are metaphorical, and not to be underſtood in a ſtrict and literal Senſe; but what we argue is, that they are ſpoken to the common Notions and Apprehenſions of Men, and evidently proceed upon this Principle, That in our religious Worſhip and Addreſſed to God, we ought to teſtify our Honour for him, by the moſt proper and received *Significations* of it. But to proceed:

By a *regular* Behaviour in the Worſhip of God, I underſtand a due Conformity to the Rules and Order of the Publick Service, and particularly, that we ſhould kneel or ſtand up at the uſual Offices. There may, I grant, be Exceptions as to this Article, in favour of weak, or aged, or indiſpos'd Perſons, or where the Seats are crouded. The Rules of the Church, in this Caſe, ſuppoſe a tacit Diſpenſation, and indeed in all others, wherein they were not *intended* to oblige: But except in ſuch Caſes, 'tis very offenſive, and a direct Contempt of the Authority, which by being preſent at our Publick Worſhip, they profeſs to ſubmit to, if People do not behave themſelves as the Rubric requires; nay, where the Rubric is ſilent, and any pious and decent Cuſtom has been long introduc'd, and is therefore to be conſider'd as agreeable to the Senſe, and as having the Approbation of the Church; Perſons that are well inclin'd, will think themſelves under an Obligation of conforming to it. And yet, without any Regard to the Authority of the Church, Order is always very lovely and deſirable, eſpecially in the Publick Worſhip of God, that we may appear not only with reſpect

to

to the Subſtance, but alſo the Form and Manner of it, to be *perfectly joined together in the ſame Mind, and in the ſame Judgment.*

3*dly* and *Laſtly*, If we reverence God's Sanctuary as we ought, we ſhall be willing to contribute what may be thought neceſſary towards the proper Ornaments of it, or the greater Solemnity of the Publick Worſhip in it.

'Twas a very juſt and pious Sentiment of *David*, 1 *Chr.* 17. 1. *Lo, I dwell in an Houſe of Cedar, but the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord is under Curtains.* While we are in the Body, the Mind is naturally affected with ſenſible Impreſſions, and they are uſually the ſtronger in proportion to the Greatneſs, the Regularity, or Beauty of the Object. 'Tis for this Reaſon one Man builds to himſelf a ſtately Palace, another contents himſelf with a leſs ſpacious, but neat and compact Habitation; but they are both agreed to adorn their different Structures in a ſplendid and ſuitable manner: But to what End? not merely for Convenience, to be ſure; a great deal of Pains and Charge might have been ſav'd, had this been the only thing propoſed. No, but becauſe the Soul is ſo apt to be mov'd with what moves the Senſes, and eſpecially to follow the Motion of the Eye; and what is eſteem'd and admir'd, is ſuppoſed to reflect an Honour upon the Owner of it.

David, which occaſion'd the Reflection I obſerv'd to you, was ſenſible how apt this Human Frailty is to operate upon us, even in things of a Spiritual Nature: And therefore 'tis really Matter of Surprize, that Perſons who ſeem to have a due Senſe of Religion, are ſometimes willing to run into their Eſtates, in Building and Embelliſhing their Seats, while the Place of God's Worſhip which they reſort to, is not ſo much perhaps as kept in tolerable Repair, or any decent Order. It muſt be own'd, at leaſt, a very diſagreeable Sight, when a high and aſpiring Structure

ſture preſents it ſelf to the Eye, and at a little Diſtance, or perhaps in the Front of it, a little thatch'd Sanctuary, which at the ſame time it appears to ſurvey with a haughty and diſdainful Air, as unworthy (and ſo indeed it is) to ſtand before it.

The Contempt ſhewn to Publick Places of God's Worſhip, is the more ſcandalous and culpable in thoſe, who profeſs themſelves Members of our Excellent Church, as the Diſſenters themſelves, who formerly were againſt any external Ornaments in their Religious Aſſemblies, are many of them come off from this Superſtitious Principle, and think themſelves concern'd to have their *Conventicles* decently at leaſt, and ſometimes ſplendidly beautify'd.

But, thank God, we need not go out of our own Communion for Examples of Piety in this kind; what I would perſuade you to, is on all proper and inviting Occaſions to follow them. And to render what I ſay more effectual, give me leave to add further the following Conſideration. That this is the moſt proper, the moſt direct, and ſignificant Method we have of rendring to God the things that are God's. 'Twas this very Conſideration which mov'd Holy *David*, with the Princes and People of *Iſrael*, to make ſuch liberal and noble Preparations for building the Temple. *Bleſſed*, ſays this Royal Prophet in the Name of them all, *be thou, Lord God of Iſrael, our Father for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the Greatneſs, and the Power, and the Glory, and the Victory, and the Majeſty; all that is in the Heaven and the Earth is thine: Thine is the Kingdom of God, and thou art exalted as Head above all; both Riches and Honour come of thee*, 1 Chron. 29. 10. And again, *ver.* 16. *O Lord our God, all this Store, which we have prepared to build thee an Houſe, cometh of thine Hand, and is all thine own.* 'Twas the ſame pious Reflection that made them bring their ſeveral Proportions with ſuch a chearful and willing Mind. And no Queſtion 'twas by a particular Direction of the

the Spirit of God, their offering so willingly is so many times repeated in this Chapter, that we might be more effectually excited to follow their pious Example on the like Occasions.

But I would observe further, That if we have the Honour of God's Sanctuary truly at Heart, our Hands will be open to any Method that may tend to promote the greater Solemnity of the Worship perform'd in it. What I have here particularly an Eye upon, as instrumental to this End, is grave and well-regulated Musick: 'Twas not, to be sure, without particular Reasons of Piety, that Musick was used by the *Jews* in their Solemn Assemblies; and that Holy *David*, in his Capacity of a Prophet, gave so many and so frequent Directions about the Performance of it. This is a strong Presumption, that Musick, under due Regulations, is proper to raise Devotion, to be sure not to hinder it, otherwise the Spirit of God would never have directed the Use of it. We grant indeed, that the Ceremonies us'd by the *Jews* in their Publick Worship, do not oblige us Christians: But what if we should grant further, that any Usage among that People, which was purely Ceremonial, ought not for that Reason, on any Account, to be publickly introduc'd into the Christian Church? Yet how will it be prov'd, that the Use of Musick, which is confess'd to have a sensible Effect on the Spirits, was purely Ceremonial? Have we not for this very Reason, much better Grounds to presume, that 'twas us'd by the *Jews* upon some Pious and Moral Consideration.

If it be said, that Musick takes off our Thoughts from the proper Duties of the Place, or is apt to fill the Mind with vain and foreign Amusements: I answer, This is not a necessary but accidental Effect of it: Other Persons find, and the more pious they are, I do not doubt, the more they find, a different Effect from it; and which disposes them very much for Heavenly

venly and Divine Meditations: Besides, this Objection will lie as well, if there be any Force in it, against Vocal Musick, or the singing of *Psalms*; because this may produce the same accidental Effect to some particular Persons.

But what we say is, tho' People are very differently affected with Musick, yet where 'tis grave and solemn it generally disposes to good and suitable Thoughts. And the Church, in what she prescribes or allows- is to consider what may be of more common Use to Edification, and *most probably* answer the End she proposes. Yet I do not see why, in our Publick Assemblies for Divine Worship, more sprightly Airs, provided there be nothing of indecent Levity in them, may not be us'd on special Occasions of Festivity or Thanksgiving. In Acts of Praise, which ought naturally to be accompany'd with Joy, what tends to refresh or exhilerate the Spirits cannot but be very proper and agreeable. We find Musick has this Effect in other Places, and on other Occasions, and it had this Effect, in chasing away the evil and *sullen* Spirit from *Saul*, why then should it be unlawful for us to praise, and *shew our selves joyful before the Lord*, with it, *Psal.* 98. 4.

I shall now proceed to a Conclusion, with a proper Application or Two from what has been said. And,

1*st*, To those who offend against the First Rule I laid down, concerning the Reverence due to God's Sanctuary, by coming late to it, or perhaps after a considerable Part of the Service is perform'd. If you are conscious to your selves of any such scandalous, especially if it have been a customary, Irreverence; be careful not to give any further Offence to God or Man, for 'tis really so to both, in the same kind: *To God*, because 'tis so insolent and preposterous a Method of presenting our selves in his Courts, in order

order to beg any Bleſſing or the Pardon of our Sins, before we have made a ſolemn and humble Confeſſion of them: *To Man*, becauſe the Church, which we are preſumed by attending her Service to be Members of, has piouſly directed and enjoin'd ſuch a Confeſſion, at the Beginning of her Service. Not to mention the other Diſorders occaſion'd by this Irreverence, and how contrary 'tis to the Rule preſcrib'd us by Holy *David*, of worſhipping God in *the Beauty of Holineſs*, Pſal. 29. 2. 96. 9. And for the ſame Reaſon,

2*dly*, If your Conſciences reproach you with any former unbecoming or irregular Behaviour *in* the Sanctuary of God, reſolve hereafter to correct ſo great an Indecency, or rather indeed ſo flaming an Impiety. Conſider how great a Contradiction it is to the very End of your appearing before God, and addreſſing your ſelves by Prayer and Supplication, and Thankſgiving to him; inſtead of this, to make your Addreſſes, or direct your Diſcourſes to one another, or to be guilty of any other idle and impertinent Behaviour; which diſcovers how little Senſe you have either of the proper Buſineſs of the Place, or of the *Preſence* you are in.

For indeed, if God do not perfectly ſee, and take notice how we behave our ſelves in his Sanctuary, to what Purpoſe are we met together here? But if he do, as moſt certainly he does, whether we conſider it or not, with what Exactneſs of Behaviour, with what profound Expreſſions of Awe and Reverence ought we to tread his Courts, and preſent our Requeſts to him?

As we would therefore give any Evidence to our ſelves or others, that we are ſenſible what we are a-doing when we come before the Lord, and bow our ſelves before the moſt High God, let us put on ſuch an Air of Serioufneſs and Compoſure, of Awe and

and Attention, as may testify the inward Veneration and Honour we have for him. How justly indeed may we otherwise apply to our selves the Words of the Patriach *Jacob?* Gen. 28. 16, 17. *Surely the Lord is in this Place, and we knew it not. How dreadful*, had we the Apprehensions of it as we ought, *is this Place! this is none other but the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven.*

3*dly*, What I shall say to those, who have in any signal manner express'd their Zeal for God's House, by contributing to the greater Beauty or Solemnity of it, shall be by Way of Applause and Encouragement.

And certainly Men cannot propose to themselves to shew their Reverence for God by a more noble, and truly pious Act: An Act whereby they *more immediately* glorify him, in letting their good Works shine before Men.

This Consideration cannot but at the same time fill the Minds of those, who are concern'd in it, with a sensible Pleasure and Satisfaction; and make their Hearts even spring for Joy, upon the Reflection of a pious Design, so Honorary to God and to themselves.

This was the Effect which the Preparations of *David* and the *Israelites*, for building the *Temple*, had upon them, 1 *Chron.* 29. 8. *Then the People rejoyc'd, for that they offer'd willingly, because with perfect Heart they offer'd willingly to the Lord*; *and David the King also*, as being Principal in the Undertaking, *rejoyc'd with* great *Joy*.

What I would observe in the last Place, and in the Conclusion of the whole Matter is, that Persons who are subservient in this respect, towards promoting the Honour of God, may piously hope that he will, by some wise and good Methods, pour down his special Blessings upon them as he did upon *Obed-Edom and his Houshold*, because of the Ark of the Covenant of God, 2 *Sam.* 6. 11.

The Sense of this, made *Nehemiah*, speaking of what he had done for the Honour of God's House, addresses his Prayer to him with so much Assurance, and as if there were something of uncommon Merit in the Service; *Remember me, O my God, concerning this*, Nehem. 13. 14.

I grant we are not to argue in too general a manner from the Temporal Blessings of the Law, to the Temporal Happiness and Prosperity of Christians in the Discharge of the same Duties, to which they were then promis'd or dispens'd: Yet where Persons are truly or eminently pious, and the very Acts of their Piety discover in them a proper Disposition to receive any Worldly Blessings; in this Case they may, in humble Submission to God's Will, *more reasonably* expect them.

Plutarch imputes the special Favours of Heaven to *Alexander*, to his remitting vast Sums into *Macedonia*, for the building certain Magnificent Temples: And such an Argument out of an Heathen Author, might perhaps have had more Influence on some Christian Generals fir'd with Ambition, to have excited an Imitation of his Example, than all the Considerations which could be urged from the natural Piety and Reasonableness of the Thing; tho' it may be consider'd too, that *Plutarch* was wrong in his Conclusion; and that the Gods of *Macedonia* ought rather to have been without any Habitations, than to have had them erected with the Spoils of Violence and Injustice.

'Tis with much greater Reason, we not only consider the Zeal of our Excellent Sovereign for God's Sanctuary, as one of the greatest Glories of her Reign; but that we piously ascribe all the other Glories of her Reign to it. God, in delighting to honour a Prince, who has had nothing more at Heart than the proper Methods of doing Honour to him, in a most eminent manner has accomplish'd that Glorious

rious Promiſe made by *Samuel*, Ch. 13. 2. 30. Not to mention that we have ſometimes Occaſion of obſerving the Accompliſhment of what is threatned in the latter Part of the Verſe; *And they that deſpiſe me ſhall be lightly eſteem'd.*

But to keep our Eyes on the brighter Part of that Text, let us with one Accord make our common Supplications to God, That he would ſtill more and more make good his Promiſes, and give his Bleſſing to all thoſe who are inſtrumental in promoting his Honour and Glory, particularly by their Zeal for his Houſe, and what has a proper or immediate Relation to it. And to render our Prayers in their Behalf, the more effectual, let us put them up according to the Form of *Nehemiah* before referr'd to; *Remember them, O God, concerning this; and wipe not out the good Deeds that they have done for the Houſe of their God, and for the Offices thereof.* Amen.

SERMON VII.

Of the Duty of Fearing God; the Regulation of it; the Influence it has to suppress Envious Thoughts; with proper Motives to it.

PROV. XXIII. 17. the latter Part of the Verse.

——*Let not thine Heart envy Sinners, but be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long.*

THE Fear of the Lord is taken in several Senses, in the Holy Scriptures; sometimes it denotes at large the whole Duty of Man: Thus *Deut.* 31. 13. *Moses* assigns this as the Reason, why the Law of God was committed to a standing Writing, and appointed to be read before the Children of *Israel*, that *they might hear, and learn to fear the Lord their God.* 'Tis us'd in the same Latitude, by holy *David*, Ps. 34. 11. *Come, ye Children, hearken unto me, I will teach you the Fear of the Lord.*

At other times the Fear of the Lord, is more especially restrain'd to signify the devotional Duties of Religion, and the more solemn Worship of God: Thus *Ps.* 89. 7. *God is greatly to be fear'd in the Assembly of*

of his Saints, and to be had in Reverence of all about him. And *Deut.* 10. 20. *Thou ſhalt fear the Lord thy God, him ſhalt thou ſerve, and to him thou ſhalt cleave, and ſhall ſwear by his Name.* Accordingly, *Matt.* 4. 10. what is here expreſs'd by fearing God, our Saviour renders, by *worſhipping* him. But the Fear of the Lord in the moſt ſtrict and proper Senſe, and wherein I ſhall at preſent conſider it, ſignifies the Paſſion of Fear, as it implies an awful Senſe of the Divine Majeſty, and of thoſe terrible and ſevere Threatnings, which God has denounc'd againſt Sinners; and upon the Account of which, the Wiſe-Man cautions us, not to entertain any envious Thoughts at the powerful and proſperous Condition of Sinners in the World.

Let not thine Heart envy Sinners, but be thou in the Fear of the Lord all the day long.

In diſcourſing upon which Words, I ſhall obſerve the following Method:

Firſt, I ſhall ſtate the true Notion of this Duty of Fearing God.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhow the Influence it has to ſuppreſs in us, all envious and diſquieting Thoughts, at the external Condition of Sinners in this World.

Thirdly, I ſhall conclude with ſome proper Motives and Conſiderations, to enforce this Duty of fearing the Lord.

Firſt, I ſhall ſtate the true Notion of this Duty of fearing the Lord. And there is the more Occaſion for this, becauſe Fear is a Paſſion, which, as the Author of the *Book of Wiſdom* obſerves, *Chap.* 17. 12. is, above all others, apt *to betray the Succours which Reaſon offers, by preſſing the Conſcience, and forecaſting grievous Things*, as he elegantly expreſſes it in the former Verſe; that is, by filling the guilty Minds of Men with anxious and diſtruſtful Thoughts of God with

terrible and disconsolate Apprehensions of his Wrath, till by Degrees perhaps they abandon themselves to all the Horrors of a wild and raging Despair.

This is the Character, and the Punishment of the damn'd: For the Devils also *believe and tremble*; they know there is a Just and All-powerful God, who for their Disobedience cast them out of Heaven, and still reserves them in Chains of Darkness, for the more glorious Triumph of his Justice. Thus apprehending their Condition what it really is, Desperate, and looking upon him as the Author of their Misery, they are possess'd with an habitual Hatred and Enmity against him, which renders them uncapable of exercising any Act of Love, or Piety towards him.

As it so highly concerns us therefore to have right Apprehensions of this Duty of fearing God, I shall lay down these two Rules, in order to give us a more just Idea of it.

1*st*, That it be such a kind of Fear, as includes in it a high Degree of Love. And,

2*dly*, That implies a generous Hope and Confidence in God.

As to the former Particular; a *filial* and reverential Fear of God is necessary, and recommended to us in Scripture, upon both these Accounts: First, as it more effectually disposes us to serve and obey God; And secondly, as it renders our Service and Obedience more acceptable to him.

1*st*. If our Love of God accompany the Fear of him, we shall make a Difficulty of Nothing he commands. For Love is a powerful and active Passion, and is not easily discourag'd or overcome; nay, when 'tis sincere, it delights to exert it self in the greatest Difficulties, and severest Trials: Accordingly, God Almighty makes an entire and uniform Obedience to *all* his Laws, the great Test of our Love to him; *If*

ye

ye love me, keep my Commandments. To pretend we love God, while we live in Disobedience to his Laws, or in the Practice of any one known Sin, is a Contradiction to the very Notion and Nature of Love; and an undeniable Argument, that our Pretences to it, are at the bottom of our Hearts, dissembled, and insincere. Had the Love of God the Power over us it ought to have, could we affront, or displease him in any thing? Nothing is more inconsistent than the very Supposition. If therefore we obey God in some Instances of our Duty, while we disobey him in others, is it not evident, whatever other Motive our Obedience may proceed from, that it does not proceed from a true Love of God; and that we should run indifferently into all manner of Disorders, were we not restrain'd from some Vices, more than others, by Natural Temperament, by Shame, by Regard to our Interests in this Life, or other *accidental* Considerations. If Men would examine their Conduct by these Rules, I'm afraid few of them would be able to produce any good Evidence, that they sincerely *love* God. The only sure Ground we can have to believe we do any thing purely for the Love of God, is to do *every* thing that may please him; to sacrifice our reigning and predominant Passion, and to have no Inclination but to do *his* Will, and keep his Commandments.

2*dly*, If our Fear of God be accompanied with our Love of him, it will render our Service and Obedience more acceptable to him. I need not set my self to prove particularly, that Charity, or the Love of God, is the *first* and greatest Commandment, and that by a necessary Consequence, there is nothing which recommends our Obedience more to God. These Truths are evident at first View. But 'tis no less evident, that what we do purely out of a Principle of Fear, what we are rather compell'd, than inclin'd to,

cannot be ſuppos'd to proceed from a Motive of Charity; we may call it if we pleaſe a Virtue of Conſtraint, but not of that Love of God, which conſtrains us in ſo free and agreeable a manner, that we cannot eaſily diſtinguiſh it from our own Choice: Where was the Goodneſs or Humanity of the unjuſt Judge, who could only be induc'd to hear the importunate Widow's Caſe, becauſe ſhe was troubleſome? Tho' he neither fear'd God nor Man, yet he was afraid ſhe might give him further Diſturbance, and ſo at laſt was prevailed upon to gratify her Requeſt, but merely in order to *relieve* himſelf.

And if our Obedience to God, proceed wholly from a ſervile Fear or Conſtraint, our Caſe is much the ſame; 'tis plain, we do not obey him for his ſake, but for our own; we have no Regard to the Honour or Authority of his Laws, but we have ſome Tenderneſs and Concern for our own Safety; and 'tis only the Fears of Suffering his Juſtice, that reſtrains us from provoking it.

But how is it poſſible ſuch a Principle as this, if we carry it no farther, ſhould procure us the Favour or Friendſhip of God? It may indeed command the Knee, but what has it to do with the Heart? It may make us fall down before God, and extort from us ſuch a Form of Worſhip, as the *Indians* are ſaid to pay their *Dæmons*, when they follow them, with diſmal Howlings, and weeping Eyes; or it may put Men upon certain rigid, tho' ridiculous Auſterities; upon long Faſtings and Pilgrimages, and upon wearing their Nails as long as their Fingers, or ſome other outward Penance and *bodily Exerciſe*; but what are all theſe Things to that living and holy Sacrifice, that *reaſonable Service*, which God requires of us; and which is animated by a free and generous Principle of *Charity*?

So

So that we may believe God will bring us to Judgment; and with those Apostate Spirits, who are already judg'd in part, we may tremble at the Apprehension of it; but except our Faith be such as *worketh by Love*, it will be wholly fruitless, and ineffectual to our Salvation.

And yet I would not be thought altogether to condemn even such a Fear of God as restrains Men from Sin, purely from the Apprehensions of Suffering; 'tis well if Men can be prevail'd upon to preserve their Innocence upon any Motive whatsoever; all that I intend is, that such a Fear is a very low and imperfect Degree of the Duty I am explaining, and insufficient, if we carry it no further, to recommend our Obedience to God.

The Fear of God, in the just and proper Notion of it, is such a Fear as a dutiful and loving Child pays to his Parents, such as will restrain us from sinning against God, tho he had threatned no Punishment against our Sins: In a word, 'tis only a more *awful* Kind of Love, which excites us to obey God, upon the Account of his own Perfections, and to hate Sin with a perfect Hatred, not only as it makes us liable to Punishment, but as it is displeasing to *him*. But,

2*dly*. The Fear of the Lord includes in it a Generous Hope and Confidence in him: For Hope is the great Spring of Industry; and the stronger it is, the more active and industrious it will render us. And therefore, to inflame our Zeal, and quicken our Obedience to God, we must endeavour to get just Notions of his Nature and Attributes. We ought frequently to meditate on his Wisdom and Goodness, and the Rewards he has promised to those who faithfully obey him.

Without conceiving thus of the Divine Perfections and Promises, we shall, especially in Times of severe Trials, be tempted to entertain unworthy and distrust-

diſtruſtful Thoughts of God: Our Fears will be apt to ſuggeſt to us, that 'tis in vain for us to endeavour to pleaſe him; or that we have no Intereſt in the *Rights* and Privileges of his Elect. If our Fear of God give way to ſuch deſponding Apprehenſions, inſtead of exciting us to a vigorous Obedience, 'twill render us incapable of performing ſome of the moſt important Duties of Religion to him: For to what end ſhould we offer up our Prayers to a Being, that we believe will not hear us? Or, how can we chearfully reſign our ſelves up to the Diſpoſitions of his Providence, who, we cannot think has any good Will or Deſign towards us?

And therefore Holy *David* argues very well, when he makes the Goodneſs of God the Foundation of our Religious Worſhip and Service; *There is Mercy with thee, O God, therefore ſhalt thou be feared.* Accordingly *Solomon*, *Chap.* 14. 26. repreſents a Holy and Generous Truſt in God, as naturally flowing from this Duty of fearing him. *In the Fear of the Lord*, ſays he, *is ſtrong Confidence.* To which I ſhall only add the Words of the wiſe Son of *Syrach*; *The Spirit of thoſe that fear the Lord ſhall live*; *for their* Hope *is in him that ſaveth them.*

We ſhould therefore be very cautious, how we entertain ſuch Doctrines, as repreſent the Dread Sovereign of the World adminiſtring the Affairs of it by a blind and irreſiſtible Decree; condemning ſome Men to Eternal Flames, and ſaving others to be the Choſen Veſſels of his Mercy, merely becauſe 'tis his *Pleaſure* to do ſo, and that he may make an Oſtentation of his abſolute Will and Sovereignty.

God indeed is a moſt Abſolute Sovereign, and his Creatures are not to give Laws to his Will; but then his own Nature is a Law to it ſelf. And tho' there is nothing afore or after God, yet according to our Modes of Conception, and Human Ways of Reaſoning, his Will muſt follow, and be regulated by his Inſi-

Infinite Wisdom and Goodness. And if we will reason concerning the Divine Attributes, we must reason after the manner of Men: So that whatever is inconsistent with the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, we may rationally conclude, can be no Part of the Divine Will.

And therefore those Principles, which would insinuate to us, that God, by Right of his absolute Dominion over his Creatures, has from all Eternity decreed the greatest Part of Mankind to everlasting and unspeakable Misery, without any Regard to their Sins, or Demerits; those Principles, I say, must in all Human Reason be judg'd as false, as they are shocking and dangerous. Except it could be made appear, that such a Decree is highly agreeable to the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God; which, one would think, no *wise* or *good* Man should undertake to do.

So far as we can judge of the Reveal'd Will of God, we must finally be judg'd by it. It was given us to be the Rule and Measure of our Obedience; and there are certain Marks and Characters in it, whereby we may judge of our State and Condition, and come to know whether we are of the Number of the Regenerate, or not: *For in this the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil; whosoever does not Righteousness, is not of God*, 1 Joh. 3. 10. If we so fear God, that we sincerely endeavour to obey his Laws, and please him, we may depend upon it, that he has not upon the Account of any secret and unknown Decree, any Displeasure against us; we have here, and in many other Places of Scripture, a plain Rule to prove and examine our selves, *whether we be in the Faith*, or in a State of Grace and Salvation: And we are requir'd upon such an Examination to *prove our own selves*; that is, make a Judgment of our Spiritual State. But what the Secrets of God are, is unknown to us: And can we

imagine

imagine, that he has commanded us to try and examine our selves by a Rule, which 'tis impossible for us to come to the Knowledge of? *Moses* has very well resolv'd this Point, and agreeably to the Rules laid down in the Gospel: *Deut.* 27. 29. *Secret Things belong to the Lord our God; but those Things that are reveal'd belong to us and our Children, that we should do all the Things of this Law.*

What the Secret and Eternal Decrees of God are, is known only to himself, and, for very wise Reasons, no doubt, conceal'd from us: But what it concerns us to know in order to our Salvation, God has made known to us; and that is his Reveal'd Will in the Holy Scriptures, whereby we must judge our selves here, and be finally judg'd hereafter. And if we take care to do all the Works of *this Law*, and regulate our Lives and Actions by it, we have nothing to fear from the Visionary Schemes of Absolute Reprobation.

This I thought proper to lay before you, in order to the Removal of those Scruples, which some honest and well-meaning Persons are too apt to entertain concerning their Condition. Their Fears suggest to them, that for ought they know, they may be of the Number of those God has eternally reprobated: And if this be their Case, then, notwithstanding all their Endeavours to please him, they still lie under an unavoidable Decree of *perishing everlastingly*. A Principle, which as 'tis highly inconsistent with the brightest Ideas we have of the Attributes and Perfections of the Divine Nature, so it has a visible Tendence, instead of an Awful Love, and Generous Trust in God, to produce in the Minds of Men black and unworthy Thoughts of him, and to paint the most frightful Images of Horror and Despair upon them. But I proceed in the next place to shew,

Secondly;

Secondly, The Influence which the Fear of God has to ſuppreſs in us all envious and diſquieting Thoughts at the External Condition of Sinners in this World. For, ſo we do but take care, by a Holy Awe and Fear of Offending God, to ſecure to our ſelves an Intereſt in his Special Providence, and Protection, and Grace here, and in the Promiſes of Glory, and Eternal Life hereafter; I am ſure we can have no Reaſon to repine at the moſt powerful or proſperous State of Wicked Men in this World, or to *complain* of our own: A great many Moral Reaſons may be given, why Vice is ſometimes crown'd with the proper Rewards of Virtue, with Length of Days, with Riches and Honour. According to the ordinary Courſe of Things in this World, except God were to interpoſe by a continued Series of Miracles, it cannot otherwiſe be, but that frequent Diſappointments ſhould happen to Virtuous and Good Men, in the Conduct of their Affairs; and on the other Hand, many favourable Hits and Accidents meet wicked Men, in the Proſecution of their worldly Deſigns.

Now ſeeing Time and Chance, upon which the Fortunes of Men ſo viſibly and generally depend, happen indifferently to all, we ought not to wonder if ſometimes the moſt profligate Sinners are ſeated at the Upper-End of the World, and flow in all the Delights of it; much leſs ought we to *envy* them upon this Account.

For to mention none of thoſe other Arguments whereby *Seneca* and *Plutarch* endeavour to juſtify the Providence of God, with reſpect to the Impunity and Proſperity of Sinners in this World; 'tis a great Miſtake to think, that Men are really happy in Proportion to the Temporal Advantages they enjoy. Our Lord himſelf has determin'd, that a *Man's Life*, or the Happineſs of Human Life, *conſiſteth not in the abundance*

bundance of the things that a Man poſſeſſeth. There are a great many Things to embitter the Enjoyments of the moſt proſperous Sinners. The Paſſions of Anger and Revenge, of Envy and Malice; the Luſt of Pride and Ambition, are as high in them, ordinarily indeed inflam'd to a greater Height, than in Perſons of a lower Form. We have a remarkable Inſtance to this Purpoſe in *Haman*, the Firſt Favourite of the Greateſt Monarch in the World; who having recounted to *Zeriſh* his Wife, and his Friends, *Eſther* 5. 11. the Glory of his Riches, and the Multitude of his Children, and the Special Favours whereby both the King and the Queen had diſtinguiſh'd him, ingenuouſly confeſſes, he has no Guſt or Reliſh of any of theſe Things, while the ſuppos'd Indignity that was offer'd him by *Mordecai* went unreveng'd. *All this*, ſays he, *availeth me nothing* (v. 13.) *ſo long as I ſee Mordecai the Jew ſitting at the King's Gate.*

And it muſt be granted indeed a ſenſible Mortification to this aſpiring Favourite, to ſee the very Perſon he *mortally* hated, and whoſe Death he had conſpired, riſing by juſt Degrees to that full Credit and Favour with the Prince, from which he apprehended himſelf continually falling. But to ſee the Rival of his Greatneſs daily advancing ſo high, not as a *Child of Fortune*, or by the Force of Intereſt, but by his own Perſonal Worth, and in Regard of the many Eminent Services he had done the Prince; particularly in unravelling the cloſe and dangerous Deſigns that had been form'd againſt him; to ſee the Prince delighting to honour this excellent Perſon by the firſt Teſtimonies of his Eſteem, and in the moſt publick Manner: Why, this inflam'd *Haman* to the laſt Degree of Diſcontent, and render'd him incapable not only of ſerving any longer with Fidelity, except *Mordecai* were remov'd, but of taking any Enjoyment in the *Royal* Favours he was *ſtill* ſuffer'd to poſſeſs.

It

It may be pretended at leaſt, to excuſe our envying the Temporal Grandeur and Proſperity of Sinners, that they deſerve not to enjoy them, or make an ill Uſe of them to the Diſhonour of God, and perhaps to the Prejudice both of the Publick, and of private Perſons; and if any Conſideration would juſtify ſo weak and dangerous a Paſſion, this might have ſome Pretence to do it: Yet as Envy is a Paſſion of *Hell*, and ſet on Fire by it, it never perhaps burns or rages to a higher Degree, or preys more upon it ſelf, than under the Apprehenſion of *Superior* Merit.

3. But what I intend is, not ſo much to ſhew that the Diſorders of the more *violent* Paſſions are common to Perſons of all Diſtinctions; but that Sinners cou'd they have every thing their Hearts deſire at Command, yet can never wholly free themſelves from the Anguiſh and Remorſe of an evil Conſcience; they carry That about them, which let them do what they can to ſtifle the Evidence of it, will be ever and anon troubleſome and diſquieting to them. They may perhaps in the Hurry of Buſineſs, or in the eager Purſuit of their Pleaſures, put on an Air of Gaiety and Chearfulneſs; but ſtill, as *Solomon* obſerves, *in the midſt of* their *Laughter there is Sadneſs of Heart*: And cou'd we ſee what paſſes within them, in their Solitudes and Retirements, when their Thoughts are cool, and the Fermentation of the Blood ceaſes for a while; cou'd we obſerve what haunts their Dreams and breaks their Sleeps, and what like a Death's Head ſerv'd up at an *Egyptian* Entertainment, often ſtrikes in upon them, even while they are regaling their Criminal Appetites; we ſhould find Reaſon to change our Thoughts concerning their Condition, and to conclude, that thoſe who enjoy the moſt of this World, many times enjoy the leaſt of themſelves.

But

But whatever the Enjoyments of Sinners may be in this World, if we take a View of them in the laſt and concluding Scene of their Lives, we ſhall be ſo far from having any Occaſion to envy them, that they will then appear to be the greateſt and *moſt wretched* Objects of Pity. When the Man of the Earth, whoſe Thoughts have been all his Life long taken up with the ſinful Gains or Pleaſures of this World, is dropping into Eternity, and ſummon'd to appear before the Tribunal of God; when all the gilded Vapours, and empty Scenes of Worldly Glory begin to vaniſh, and all his Thoughts of thoſe Things, wherein he plac'd his chief Happineſs, *periſh*, and he has nothing before his Eyes but Horror and Confuſion, and the Wrath of an Almighty and Avenging God; why, upon this View, cou'd we ſuppoſe a Sinner ſucceeding in all his Deſigns and Deſires in this World; and that not only for the ordinary Term of Human Life, but for many Ages; yet this laſt Fatal Cataſtrophe, I ſay, is ſufficient to *undo* all, and to ſhew us what a fooliſh Part he has been for ſo long a time acting; and what a miſerable Choice he has made, in preferring the Pleaſures of Sin, to the *Fear* of the Lord! How little Reaſon then have we to envy the Impunity, or Proſperity of ſuch a Sinner? And therefore it was a very wiſe Concluſion of *Solomon*, and very pertinent to the preſent Conſideration, *Eccleſ.* 8. 12, 13. *Though a Sinner do Evil a hundred times, and his Days be prolonged, yet ſurely I know it ſhall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it ſhall not be well with the wicked, neither ſhall he prolong his Days, which are as a Shadow, becauſe he feareth not before God.*

I ſhall now, according to my Method propos'd, conclude with ſome proper Motives and Arguments, to enforce this Duty of fearing God. And,

1. From the Conſideration of his infinite Power and Majeſty.

The

The main Support of the Authority of Human Laws, is, generally ſpeaking, the Power they are back'd with, to puniſh the Violation of them. This is the *Atlas* upon which all Society and Government is ſuſtain'd: Without this, wicked Men would ſoon break through all the Ties of what they call Conſcience and Honour, and there would be no living for good Men; nay, the better Men were, their Condition wou'd be ſo much worſe, and expoſe them the more to Violence and Injuſtice.

But now if the Apprehenſion of being call'd to Account, and undergoing a Temporal Puniſhment, be many times ſufficient to keep wicked Men within the Bounds of their Duty: How much more awful and tremendous muſt the Thoughts of that Divine Power be, which in a Moment can cruſh Sinners into Nothing, or into a State infinitely worſe than Annihilation? 'Tis upon this Conſideration our Saviour repreſents the greateſt Power of wicked Men, and the laſt Efforts of their Malice in this World, rather as Matter of a generous Contempt than Fear. *Fear not them*, ſays he, *which kill the Body, and after this have no more that they can do*; their Power at the moſt extending to cut the Thread of a Life ſhort, which is every Moment running off apace: But *fear him*, let the Power of that great God ſtrike you with the moſt awful and awakening Apprehenſions, *who is able to deſtroy both Body and Soul in Hell.*

'Twas to create the greater Reverence to his Laws, that God deliver'd them on Mount *Sinai*, in ſuch a dreadful and aſtoniſhing manner, in the Language of Thunder and Lightning; *Unto thee it was ſhew'd*, ſays *Moſes*, ſpeaking of the ſurprizing Effects of God's Power and Majeſty in the Delivery of the Law, *that thou mighteſt know the Lord, he is God*, Deut. 4. 43. Accordingly, he expreſly tells the *Jews*, *Exod.* 20. 20. upon thoſe terrible Appearances; *God is come to prove*

them, *and that his Fear may be before their Faces, that they ſin not.*

'Twas to excite this Religious Fear, that the *Lacedemonians* repreſented the Images of their Gods in Armour, that their Votaries might be poſſeſs'd with a more profound Regard, and Dread of that Divine Power; which ſtood always ready arm'd to take Vengeance on thoſe, who ſhould provoke or contemn it.

2. Another Motive to the Fear of God ſhall be taken from his Omniſcience; his intimate Knowledge, I mean, of all our Thoughts, Words and Actions, and the ſecret Springs of them. And therefore this Conſideration alone, if duly attended to, might, one would think, be ſufficient to put a ſtop not only to the external Acts of Sin, but to the very firſt Motions and Tendencies towards it.

Sin is ſo ſhameful in it ſelf, and ſo much below the Dignity of Human Nature, that all Perſons, except ſuch as *glory in their Shame*, endeavour to keep their Sins as private as they can; but to what End are we ſo careful to conceal our Vices, and even the leaſt Indecencies we are guilty of, from the Eyes of Men; when the Eye of God is always upon us, when we can go no where from his Preſence, but all things are naked and open to him?

'Twas upon this Conſideration Holy *Job* was poſſeſs'd with ſo awful and pious a Reverence towards God; therefore, ſays he, *am I troubled at his Preſence, when I conſider, I am afraid of him*, Job 23. 15.

Sinners, 'tis true, as counterfeit Coin paſſes under a fair Impreſſion, may dreſs themſelves up in a Hypocritical Shew of Religion, and by that means put a Cheat upon others, tho' the greateſt in Reality upon themſelves: But God is not to be impos'd upon; he knows our Hearts, and underſtands our Thoughts afar off; he perfectly ſees upon what ſecret Motives, and

and for what Ends we act, whatever false Turn or Colour we may give our Actions, to outward Appearance.

Holy *David*, upon this Divine Attribute, *Psal.* 139. 1, 2. has very just and sublime Thoughts. *O Lord, thou hast searched me out and known me; thou knowest my down-sitting and up-rising; thou understandest my Thoughts afar off*, &c.

'Tis to the Force and Influence of this Consideration, that the *Psalmist* elsewhere ascribes the Triumph of his Innocency over the Power of Temptation, Psal. 16. 8. *I have set the Lord always before me; for he is on my right Hand, therefore I shall not fall:* And, no doubt, the same Consideration of God's continual Presence and Inspection over us, would, if duly improv'd, have the same Effect upon us too.

If the Presence, not only of a Person for whom we have an Esteem, but even of a Fool or a Child, be sometimes sufficient to restrain us from a sinful or indecent Action; how much more careful ought we to be of our Behaviour, before that Holy and Divine Majesty, who fills Heaven and Earth, and whose Notice nothing can escape?

Do we really consider, my Brethren, what it is to have the Eternal God a constant Witness and Observer of all our Actions, and even of all our Thoughts and Intentions; and that he keeps a perfect Register of them, and enters them into those Books which St. *John* tells us will be opened at the Great Day of Accounts, and out of which we must be judg'd? If we do consider these things, and yet thereby are not effectually restrain'd from sinning against God, there is but one Argument which can be supposed to work upon our Fears; and that is,

3. The Consideration of God's Justice: And indeed the Two former Attributes, the Power and Omniscience of God, if he proceeded wholly by an Arbi-

trary Will in Judging the World, and not upon the Reasons of Justice and Equity, would render him rather an Object of Terror, than of a Filial and Religious Fear: But when we are assur'd from express Revelation, that God hath appointed a Day, wherein he will Judge the World *in Righteousness*; and that an Eternity of Happiness or Misery depends on the Judgment he will then pronounce, according to the good or evil Actions of Men in this Life: This is an irresistible Argument, to excite us to the Practice of Piety, *and to work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling.*

Wicked Men, I am sensible, are apt to flatter themselves, because all Things go smoothly on with them here, with the Hopes of Mercy and Impunity hereafter: And this is no more, than what *Solomon* long since observ'd; *Because Sentence against an evil Work is not speedily executed, therefore the Hearts of the Sons of Men are fully set in them to do Evil*, Eccles. 8. 11. Whereas the Inference ought to be made directly contrary; that seeing God, in this World, suffers Sinners to escape with Impunity; therefore there is another World, wherein, for the Vindication of his Justice, he will call them to a strict and severe Account, for all their prosperous Sins and Impieties.

Accordingly *Solomon*, in the Conclusion of this Excellent Book of *Ecclesiastes*, makes the Consideration of a Judgment to come, the great Motive to excite us to live in the Fear of God, and Obedience to his Laws. Let us, *says he*, hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter: *Fear God and keep his Commandments; for this is the whole of Man:* And then adds in the next Words, as a Reason to enforce all he had said, and wherewith I shall conclude, as the strongest Argument, to the same End: *For God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil.*

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SERMON VIII.

The Circumstances of Christ's Appearance in the World, no Objection against the Truth of the Christian Religion, but highly conducing both to confirm the Truth, and enforce the Duties of it.

ISAIAH LIII. 2.

And when we shall see him, there is no Beauty, that we should desire him.

THESE Words are a Prophecy of the low Circumstances, wherein our Saviour made his first Appearance in the World, and of the Prejudices, which the *Jews* more particularly entertain'd against him on that Account.

Now among other Arguments whereby we prove that *Jesus* of *Nazareth* was the Christ, the Accomplishment of what was written of him many Ages before he was born, is of the greatest Importance.

But of all the Prophecies concerning him, there were none more clearly or fully express'd, or more remarkably fulfill'd than those contain'd in this Chapter. The very Consideration whereof, is said to have

open'd the Eyes, and made the first Step towards the Conviction of a known Atheistical Wit, the brigheſt perhaps and the moſt lively, that diſtinguiſh'd himſelf in the late Age.

And indeed this Argument for the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion, taken from the Accompliſhment of the Prophecies concerning Chriſt, and particularly thoſe before us, cannot fail of convincing all Perſons, who are in a Diſpoſition to be convinc'd.

Notwithſtanding this, the Prophet foreſaw, as he complains in the firſt Verſe, there would be ſome who wou'd not believe *his Report*, but reject the Truth and Authority of the Prophecy it ſelf; as all Atheiſts and Infidels do in general: Others, that tho' they believ'd his Predictions (concerning the *Meſſiah*) to be divinely reveal'd, yet would not ſee, tho' 'twere never ſo viſible, the Accompliſhment of them; and theſe were more particularly the *Jews:* And he gives the Reaſon of it in the Words of my Text, that *when they ſhould ſee him, there would be no Beauty, that they ſhould deſire him*; i. e. how excellent and amiable ſoever he might be in his Perſonal Appearance, as to be ſure he was, conſider'd only as a Man, above all other Men that ever liv'd, yet he would not come attended with that outward Pomp and Splendor the *Jews* expected; and wherein they thought all the Beauty and Glory of human Life conſiſted: In this Senſe we are to underſtand theſe Words concerning the Bleſſed Saviour and Redeemer of the World, *And when we ſhall ſee him, there is no Beauty that we ſhould deſire him.*

In diſcourſing therefore on the Words, I ſhall,

Firſt, Shew againſt Unbelievers, That the Accompliſhment of the Prophecies (and particularly thoſe of this Chapter) which concern d Chriſt or the *Meſſiah*, are a convincing Argument of the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion.

Secondly,

Secondly, Againſt the *Jews*, That the mean Appearance of *Chriſt* in the World, is no good Objection or Argument againſt the Chriſtian Religion; or of any Force to prove, that *Jeſus* of *Nazareth* was not the *Chriſt*.

Thirdly, And laſtly, Shall endeavour to make ſome Improvements from the whole, and ſo conclude.

And *(Firſt)* I am to ſhew againſt Unbelievers, That the Accompliſhment of the Prophecies, *&c.*

'Tis agreed on all Hands, and even by the Atheiſt himſelf, that there can be no human or natural Reaſon aſſign'd for ſuch future and remote Events, as have no viſible or natural Cauſe to produce them; but are of a caſual and contingent Nature, and many times depend on the free Choice and Will of Man; and therefore the Prediction of ſuch Events (ſince it cannot be aſcrib'd to any Human or Natural Reaſon) muſt be ſuppos'd to proceed from ſome ſupernatural Revelation. So that 'tis a good Argument of *Cicero*, *Si divinatio eſt, Dii ſunt*; if there be ſuch a thing as Divination or Prophecy, it muſt proceed from a Divine Power. The Effect muſt bear the Character of the Cauſe.

'Tis the Argument whereby God proves himſelf to be the *Lord*, and that there is no other Saviour beſide. *I have declar'd*, ſays he by the Prophet, *and have ſav'd, and I have ſhewed, when there was no ſtrange God among you; therefore ye are my Witneſſes*, Iſa. 43. 11, 12.

By the ſame Reaſon, he proves the Gods of the Nations to be Idols, and no Gods, becauſe they could not foretell future Events. *Produce your Cauſe, ſaith the Lord:* So the Prophet challengeth the Idols of the Heathen, in the Name of God, *Bring forth your ſtrong Reaſons. Let them ſhew us what ſhall happen, and de-*

declare to us Things to come; shew the Things that are hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods.

To have done this would indeed have been a considerable Proof of their *Divinity*, and a Vindication of their Pretensions to it; and therefore the Prophet is willing to put the Trial of their Cause upon this Issue.

But because they were not able to do any thing in this Kind, he concludes, *Behold, they are all Vanity, their molten Images are Wind and Confusion*, Isa. 41. 29. So that both Reason and Revelation confirm this Truth, That the Knowledge of such Things as have no necessary Connection with the Chain of Natural Causes, but lie loose and independent of it, and at a great Distance of Time, is too excellent for human Understanding *to attain unto*, or indeed, for any other created Being.

'Tis the Prerogative of God (or of such as are immediately inspir'd by him) to foreknow such Things: And therefore Prophecy is frequently express'd in Scripture by a Vision; whereby something is represented to the Mind, that of it self it cannot attain to the Knowledge of; some Discovery made of such Things or Effects, as are no ways visible to the Eye of Human Reason in their Causes.

Wise Men, 'tis true, may make shrew'd Conjectures concerning the Success of certain Things or Actions that lye, as it were, before them, by comparing them with what has formerly pass'd on the like Occasions by considering the Power and Interest, the Prudence and Capacity of the visible Actors. And this was the Policy of the Oracles of Old, when they were consulted about the Success of a Battel or Expedition, they would make a nice Enquiry concerning the Strength and Power of the Enemy, the Number of their Forces, and the Condition they were in; or any other Circumstance which might give them a Light into their Affairs: And on which side

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Victory was most likely to incline, they would declare themselves more plainly; but according as the Event was more doubtful, the Oracle was so too.

But now the Prophecies of Scripture, which referr'd to the *Messiah*, were of Things at such a Distance, and of such a Nature, that there could not be any probable Reason assigned, or tolerable Conjecture made of them.

And yet there was not one Tittle of all the Prophecies which relate to the Manner or Design of Christ's Appearance in the World, that fell to the Ground. But in the *Fulness of Time*, the most minute Significations of them, had their full and perfect Accomplishment; as is evident to any one that compares the several Circumstances of his Birth, his Manner of Life, his Sufferings and Death, with the several Predictions concerning him in this Chapter: Nay, there is one Prophecy in it relating to him, the fulfilling whereof was so far from being visible in any Natural Cause, that it was absolutely above the Power of *Nature*. You will find it at the 10th Verse, where in consequence of his Meritorious Death and Sufferings, God promises to restore him to Life again, that he may reap the glorious Fruits of them; *yet it pleas'd the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to Grief; when thou shalt make his Soul an Offering for Sin, he shall see his Seed; he shall prolong his Days, and the Pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his Hand.*

So that not only those Things, to the Production whereof no visible Cause in Nature concurr'd, but such also as were above the Power of Nature, were foretold of the *Messiah*, and accordingly accomplish'd in him. And therefore the Prediction of them must be ascrib'd to an immediate Revelation from that God, to whose Knowledge all Future Events, and to whose Eternity all future Time, with respect to us, is not only present, but who directs the Course of Nature by a secret and invisible Hand, and over-

over-rules the Designs and Actions of Men to what Ends and Purposes he pleases.

Now to sum up what I have said on this Head; Seeing the Prophecies which referr'd to our Blessed Saviour, were concerning very remote and casual Events, whereof there could be no probable or natural Reason given at the Time they were writ; nay, seeing some of them could not be accomplish'd, but by the Concurrence of a Power Superior to the second Causes, a Power altogether *Supernatural:* And lastly, seeing all of them notwithstanding were fully accomplish'd in Jesus of *Nazareth:* Then I think I have sufficiently made out my Argument against Unbelievers, that He is the Christ, the *Messiah.*

I proceed now in the next Place, to shew against the *Jews*, That the mean Appearance of Christ in the World, is no good Objection or Argument against the Christian Religion, or of any Force to prove, that Jesus of *Nazareth* was not the Christ; and that upon the two following Accounts.

1. As the Grounds upon which the *Jews* expected a Temporal *Messiah*, were false, and indeed impracticable.

2. As the State and Condition of Life our Saviour chose in the World, was most agreeable to the Great Ends and Design of his Coming into it. And,

1. As the Grounds upon which the *Jews* expected a Temporal *Messiah*, were false and impracticable.

The Prophecies concerning the *Messiah*, being at the Time of our Saviour's Appearance in the World to receive their Accomplishment, there was then, 'tis true, a General Expectation of his Coming, by all those *who waited for the Consolation of Israel:* And they who were in any measure conversant in the Scriptures, knew, that the Great Period was then at hand, where-

wherein *Daniel*'s Seventy Weeks were expir'd, and the Glory of the Second Temple was to be greater than the Glory of the First; with respect to the Magnificence of which, it fell much short; and therefore could only be greater than the First, with respect to the Presence of the Saviour of the World, the Son of God in it; *The Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person.*

But the *Jews* generally thought of nothing less, than that this Great and Glorious Person should take upon him the *Form of a Servant*, and appear in such a mean and low Condition. They look'd for a *Messiah*, who should fight their Battles, and conquer all before them; and having deliver'd them out of the Hands of their Enemies, who at that time had them in Subjection, should make *Judea* the Seat and Mistress of the Empire of the World. And this they were the more confirm'd in, because the Special Favours of Providence seem'd in a great measure to have been confin'd for many Ages to that People; the rest of the World, as they were *Aliens* to the Commonwealth, so were they also to the Special Mercies of *Israel*.

The Disciples of our Saviour themselves were carry'd down with the Current of this popular Prejudice; *They trusted it had been he, who would have redeem'd Israel*, Luke 24. 21. And what Kind of Redemption they meant, appears from the Question they put to him, *Acts* 1. 6. *Lord, wilt thou again at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?* And probably the Mother of *Zebedee*'s Children design'd no more, by desiring of Christ that one of her Sons might sit on his Right Hand, and the other on his Left, when he came into his Kingdom; than that, when he took the Administration of his Government upon him, they might be his First Favourites, or Ministers of State.

But

But no ſooner did the Diſciples of Chriſt underſtand that God alſo, in his Name, had granted Remiſſion of Sins to the *Gentiles*, but they were convinc'd of their Error. For Pardon of Sin being the greateſt and higheſt Act of Authority; our Lord, by being inveſted with it, gave an undeniable Proof of his being the Saviour of the World, the King of the *Gentiles* as well as the *Jews*; and that the Special Acts of his Grace and Government ſhould not be confin'd to One Nation or People; but that all the Families of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed thro' him; and, *that Repentance and Remiſſion of Sins ſhould be preach'd in his Name, through* all *Nations*.

So that the Kingdom of Chriſt being not only of a Spiritual Nature, but what all Perſons in the World, who would come into it upon the Evangelical Terms of Faith and Repentance, ſhould be admitted to the Privileges of; I conclude, that the Grounds upon which the *Jews* expected a Temporal *Meſſiah*, were not only falſe, but impracticable: Falſe, with reſpect to the Spirituality of his Kingdom; and impracticable, with reſpect to the Extent and Univerſality of its Bleſſings and Privileges.

I now proceed, 2*dly*, to ſhew, That the State and Condition of Life our Saviour choſe in the World, was moſt agreeable to the Great Ends and Deſign of his coming into it.

1. As it gave a ſtrong Confirmation to the Truth of that Holy Religion he came to plant in the World.

2. As it was a Wiſe and Excellent Method to recommend the Practice of Religion to the World. And,

3. As he was to offer up himſelf a Sacrifice and Propitiation for the Sins of the World.

In

In all these Respects, the mean, and, in the Eyes of the *Jews*, contemptible Appearance which our Saviour made upon Earth, was so far from being any Objection against his being the *Messiah*, or against the Truth of the Christian Religion, that we ought to admire the Reasons and Wisdom of his Condescending Goodness herein.

And *1st*, As hereby he gave a strong Confirmation to the Truth of that Holy Religion he came to plant in the World.

Had our Saviour appear'd among the *Jews* with all the Pomp and Pageantry they expected; had he been a Victorious and Triumphant Prince, that had given Laws to the World, and back'd the Authority of them with the Sword; the Atheist might then have pretended, that the Christian, as well as other Religions in the World, was the Daughter of Power and Force, and a mere Politick Invention, contriv'd by its Author, (as it lays down the most strict and excellent Rules for securing the Obedience of Subjects) the better to settle and confirm his Government to him, if he should find a favourable Juncture to possess himself of it.

But now the Effects of the Christian Religion on the Minds of Men, and the Methods of propagating it, cannot be ascrib'd to any Human Power or Authority. Instead of Employing the Secular Arm to compel Men to come into the Church, God put a Sceptre of Righteousness into the Hands of Christ: He authoriz'd him to give such a Body of Holy and Righteous Laws to his Church, as might be proper to work upon their Minds by the gentle Methods of Reason and Persuasion. To which End, our Lord spoke indeed as one having Authority; he open'd his Mouth, and taught with the brightest Evidence and Conviction; but after all, he left Men to the free Determination of their own Choice, whether they

they would embrace, or reject his Doctrine. He us'd no Force to engage them to follow him whether they would or no. Nay, he chose such Circumstances of Life, that he neither *could*, nor *might* appear to use any Human Methods of Bribing or Corrupting the Judgments of Men, of Opening their Eyes to let them see the Truth of his Doctrine, by shewing them the present Advantage or Interests, that might induce them to become Disciples to it.

For the same Reason, he made Choice of such for his Companions and Disciples, as were Men of mean Occupations, and low Fortunes; a Company of illiterate *Galileans*, and poor Fishermen: *Men*, as to their Natural Capacities, no ways qualified for so difficult and high an Undertaking, as the Establishing a new Religion against the settled Laws and Powers, the Prejudices and Passions, the Vanities and Vices of a Corrupt World.

The Design of the Holy Jesus in all this, was to shew, That the Excellency of the Power which attended himself and his Apostles in Preaching the Doctrine of Salvation, might not be ascrib'd unto Men, but unto God. He would make way for the Reception and Establishment of the Gospel in the World, by no other Means, but by the Evidence of its Truth, the Excellency of its Morals, the Number of the Miracles wrought to confirm it, and the Simplicity of those who were the first Preachers and Promoters of it. And indeed, that the Christian Religion, by such mean and unlikely Instruments, should in so short a Time extend it self so wide, and that they should reap such a Harvest of Triumphs over so many Enemies, seems to have been the greatest Miracle *of all*.

Accordingly, the Apostles triumph in it, *That the Weapons of their Warfare were not carnal, but mighty thro' God, to the pulling down of strong Holds; casting down every*

every Imagination, and every high Thing, that exalteth it ſelf againſt the Knowledge of God.

And as they were deſtitute of Power, ſo were they alſo of thoſe other Popular Arts of Perſuaſion, Human Eloquence and Learning; except St. *Paul*; who yet, upon all Occaſions, diſclaim'd them: And therefore, in a high Admiration of the Growth and Increaſe of Chriſtianity by ſuch improbable and weak Means, he breaks out into that open Challenge to the Philoſophers of his *own*, and all *ſucceeding Ages: Where*, ſays he, *is the Wiſe? Where is the Scribe? Where is the Diſputer of this World? Hath not God made fooliſh the Wiſdom of this World?* 1 Cor. 1. 20. That is, How ineffectual are all the Preſcripts and Applications of Philoſophy, in order to heal the Wounds, and repair the Diſorders of Human Nature; in Compariſon of this fooliſh Way, as you term it, of Preaching the Goſpel of Chriſt, by a Company of poor illiterate Men, that are altogether Strangers to Philoſophy and the Sciences?

I need ſay no more to ſhew, that not only the Appearance of Chriſt in the World, under ſuch mean Circumſtances, but his chuſing for his Diſciples and Followers Men of no Fortune or Figure in any Reſpect, gave a conſiderable Confirmation to the Truth of that Holy Religion he came to plant in the World: And therefore I proceed in the

2*d* Place to ſhew, That the State and Condition of Life our Saviour choſe in the World, was alſo a wiſe and excellent Method to recommend the Practice of Religion to it.

Naked Truth operates but very ſlowly upon the Minds of moſt Men: We muſt therefore cloath it in a viſible Dreſs; we muſt give it a Body; we muſt exemplify it; we muſt, if I may ſo ſpeak, *incarnate* it.

This

This was the Method the Holy *Jesus* took; he did not think it enough to reveal the Will of God to Mankind; this he might have done, as God deliver'd the Law in the *Mount*, by speaking to some extraordinary Prophet, and committing what he spoke to a standing Writing, without rendring himself visible. But God gave him *a Body*, that Men might from his own Mouth hear the Words of Eternal Life, and *give so much the more earnest heed*, As the Apostle exhorts, from the Consideration of the Dignity of Christ's Person, *to the things that were spoken, lest at any time they should let them slip*, Hebr. 2. 1.

To this End, among others, the Son of God took upon him our Nature; was manifested in the Flesh, and so became in a true Sense incarnate, and shew'd his Sacred Body to the Eyes of Mortals.

But this was not the sole End, or the End I here chiefly design, in mentioning the Incarnation of Christ. He became Incarnate, not only that Men might with open Face behold his Glory, *The Glory as of the only begotten Son of God*; but that he might converse familiarly with them. In a word, he took our Nature upon him, that he might at once teach with a more visible Authority, and visibly exemplify what he taught, in the Manner of his Life and Conversation.

This is what I chiefly mean, by saying, That if we would teach Men the Truth effectually, we must render it as near as we can visible to them, and make it obvious to their very Senses. Now 'tis evident the Circumstances of Life which our Saviour made Choice of, gave him the greatest Opportunity of an Exemplary Vertue and Holiness.

There is indeed no State of Life, wherein Men have not frequent Occasions of letting the World see the Principles they act upon, by the Manner of their external Conduct and Behaviour; yet the more splendid and heroical Vertues are only for great Perso-

nages:

nages: The Rich, the Noble and the Powerful have indeed, in their ſeveral Provinces, excellent Advantages of recommending Religion to the World, by doing Good, by their Moderation, their Affability, Clemency, and the like.

But as to the more ordinary and paſſive Vertues of Human Life, ſuch as Patience and Reſignation, under Circumſtances of Want and Diſgrace of Injuries and Affronts, of Temptations to Envy and Diſcontent, and the like; It muſt be own'd, generally ſpeaking, that there is a greater Scope for the Tryal and Exerciſe of our Vertue, in Proportion, as we are in a lower State and Condition of Life.

Our Bleſſed Lord, who deſign'd his Religion for the general Good of Mankind, wiſely made uſe of ſuch Means as were moſt agreeable to this End; and choſe ſuch a condition of Life, as might render his Example of moſt general Influence.

Beſides, had he, while he preach'd up a generous Contempt of this World, and caution'd Men ſo frequently againſt the Love of it; had he, I ſay, at the ſame time, if there be no Impiety in the very Suppoſition, indulg'd himſelf in Luxury and Pleaſures; all his wiſe Diſcourſes would have had much leſs Weight and Efficacy, in order to convince Men of the Vanity and Precarioufneſs of worldly Enjoyments.

But when he accommodated the Circumſtances of his Life to the Precepts he deliver'd, eſpecially when it lay in his Power to have been the Richeſt and Greateſt Perſon upon the Earth; this was an Argument, that he was ſerious and in *good Earneſt* in what he taught; and that whatever Conveniencies there may be in the Things of this World, yet we ought to let our Thoughts and Affections ſit looſe upon them, and take care that the Love of God and of our Duty be always ſupperior to them.

For this Reaſon it was, the Son of God became Poor, that we thro' his Grace might become *rich*; *rich* in all thoſe good Works and Heavenly Vertues, which he choſe a poor State of Life, as moſt proper to exemplify to us. I might more particularly obſerve the ſame Reaſon for the Manner of our Saviour's Appearance, with reſpect to the other Duties he was ſo bright and illuſtrious an Example of; *viz.* his Humility, his Patience, and his entire Reſignation to the Will of God. But leaving the Improvement of theſe Hints to your own Meditations, I haſten to my

3*d* and *Laſt* Particular; *viz.* That the Circumſtances wherein our Saviour made his Appearance in the World, were moſt agreeable to his Deſign of becoming a Sacrifice and Propitiation for the Sins of the World: For tho' our Redemption is attributed more eſpecially to his Sufferings and Death upon the Croſs, as his Sacrifice was there finiſh'd, yet we ought to look upon it as begun as ſoon as he was born into the World. For ſo great a Perſon to be born in a Stable, to be laid in a Manger without Retinue, without Attendance, without the common and ordinary Conveniencies, which the meaneſt Perſons are provided of, on ſuch Occaſions: This, I ſay, as 'twas ſo viſible a Part of the Humiliation, ought alſo to be conſider'd as a Part of the Sacrifice of Chriſt: So likewiſe his Circumciſion, the Difficulties he was expos'd to in *Ægypt*, and by the Way thither, the innumerable Injuries and Affronts he met with in the Courſe of his Miniſtry, his Faſting and Abſtinence, his having not ſo much as where to lay his Head, his being derided and ſpit upon, and the reſt of thoſe preparatory Pains and Indignities he ſuffer'd before he was nail'd to the *Croſs*; all theſe things, I ſay, ought to enter into the Notion of that Sacrifice, which Chriſt offer'd up for us, and which was then and there conſummated.

This

This was the Notion which *Isaiah*, who speaks of our Saviour more like an Historian than a Prophet, had of his meritorious Sufferings and Performances for us; *He is*, says he, *despised and rejected of Men, a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief*; *and we hid, as it were, our Faces from him*; *he was despised and we esteem'd him not. Surely he hath born our Griefs, and carried our Sorrows*; *we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.* Then our Evangelical Prophet proceeds to the Consummation of Christ's Sacrifice; but 'tis plain, includes his preceding Sufferings under the Notion of it.

And thus having shewn, that the State and Condition of Life our Saviour chose in the World, was most agreeable to the great Ends and Design of his coming into it:

3*dly* and *Lastly*, Let us now see what Practical Improvements can be made from what has been said; and then I shall conclude.

1*st*. If the Accomplishment of the Prophecies concerning our Saviour be an evident Proof of his being the *Messiah*, the great Prophet that was to come into the World; then whatever Doctrines he taught, are certainly true and divinely revealed; Heaven and Earth shall sooner pass away, than one Jot or Tittle of what he has spoken shall fall to the Ground. Then 'tis as true, as that *Jesus Christ* came in great Humility into the World, that he shall one Day come again, in his Glorious Majesty, to judge us. Then 'tis true, that all Nations at that Day shall be gather'd before him, to give an Account of their Actions, and receive Sentence according to the Works done in the Body, whether they be good or bad; *They that have done Evil shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal*, Matt. 25. 46.

In a word, if we believe in Jesus Christ, we must believe what he himself has so expressly declar'd, That *the Word he has spoken unto us, the same shall judge all Men*

at the last Day, Joh. 12. 48. The Woman of *Samaria* had this Notion of the *Messiah*, That his Office was to make known the Will of God, and establish the great Truths of Religion; *I know*, says she, *that the Messiah cometh which is called Christ; when he cometh he will tell us all Things*, Joh. 4. 25. This *Messiah* we profess to believe is really come; we are met in a solemn Manner to celebrate his coming: He has told us in the Holy Scriptures the Things I have mentioned unto you; and indeed, this was the great End of his coming into the World, that he might teach us to flee from the Wrath to come, and work out our Salvation by leading a holy and good Life; *Once in the End of the World*, says the Apostle, *hath Christ appeared to put away Sin.*

But are you, my Brethren, fully convinc'd of these important and great Truths? Do you really believe the Scriptures? I know that you believe them; but my Meaning is, Do you believe them effectually? Do you regulate your Lives and Conversation by them? If the Truths of our Holy Religion lie floating and unactive in your Understandings, without affecting your Consciences, this Article of your Faith, That Christ is come into the World, instead of being Matter of Joy and Gladness to you, will one Day be the very Sting and Aggravation of your Guilt.

Better had it been for you that he had never been born into the World, and made known the Will of God to you, than that you should *neglect so great Salvation.* He will only be a Saviour to those who obey him as their King, and live in a faithful and sincere Obedience to his Laws.

2*dly*, From the Circumstances of our Saviour's Appearance in the World, let us learn the Duties of Patience, Charity and Humility. And,

1*st*, From the Humiliation of Christ, let us learn a patient Submission and Resignation to the Will of God.

What-

Whatsoever State we are in, let us be therewith content; and we cannot have a more powerful Reason to persuade us to be so, than that Jesus Christ, while he was here upon Earth, was expos'd to so many and great Sufferings. This gives us a comfortable and certain Assurance, that whatever our Condition be, yet if we faithfully endeavour to please God, he can have no Displeasure against us on that Account; nay, that those who are the most dear to him, who make it their Endeavour to walk before him in all *well*-pleasing, yet for one End of his Grace and Providence or other, are many times exercised with severe Tryals and Afflictions; which should teach us, as on the one Hand, *not to despise the chastning of the Lord*; so on the other, *not to faint when we are rebuked of him.*

2dly, Let us learn the great Duty of Charity and Beneficence.

It was for us Men, and for our Salvation, Christ so humbled himself: Let his Love to us, when we were Enemies to him, when upon all Accounts we so little deserv'd it, teach us to love one another.

It was the constant Business and Employment of his Life to do Good; as if this had been the only End for which he was born, and for which he came into the World. Let us, in Pursuance of his Design in it, follow the Steps of this his most Blessed Example, and resolve from this Moment to do all the Good we are capable of doing to all Men.

But there is indeed another Argument before us, proper to the Time, to enforce this Duty: We are not only commemorating the *Advent* of our Saviour, and the Circumstances which preceded his Birth, but preparing to celebrate the standing Memorial of his Death; that Blessed Sacrament which he instituted as a lively and visible Pledge of his Love to us, and a Fœderal Right, whereby we profess and engage our Loving-Kindness to one another.

Now Love is an active and generous Passion, and where-ever 'tis sincere and founded on Christian Principles, it will discover it self in real and sensible Effects.

3*dly*, In order to humble the Pride of our Hearts, when we are tempted to bear our selves high upon any Worldly Advantages, which give us a Superiority above our Brethren; let us consider how *Jesus Christ*, the Best and Wisest, and infinitely Greatest Person that ever appeared in the World, judg'd of these Things; how little he esteem'd them; how meek and lowly he was in Mind; how affable and condescending in his Temper and Conversation. Certainly after this, as nothing we can stoop to, deserves to be call'd a Condescension; so the highest Condition of Life we can climb to, cannot deserve the Name of Greatness.

Let us then be particularly careful to cloath our selves, in this solemn Season, with that Grace which is so suitable to it; let us learn of the Holy *Jesus*, and be meek and lowly in Mind as he was, when he came to visit us in so great Humility; that at the last Day, when he shall come again in his Glorious Majesty, to Judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the Life Immortal; through him who liveth and reigneth, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, now and for ever. *Amen.*

SER-

SERMON IX.

In what Respects Afflictions are for our Advantage.

ROM. VIII. 28.

And we know that all Things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the call'd according to his Promise.

EVERY thing is to be consider'd so far proper or prejudicial to us, as it tends to promote or obstruct our principal End. 'Tis with an Eye to this that we are constantly to regulate our Choice, and make a Judgment of the good or unhappy Circumstances we are in.

Upon this View, Pain, Poverty, and Disgrace it self, Things in themselves naturally Evil, have notwithstanding a moral Use and Expediency in them, as they may prove the Occasion of exercising our Virtues, and rectifying our Measures; and indeed would always do so, were we to take them right, and carefully observe the Design of God in them.

This is the Argument whereby the Apostle would here encourage the *Romans* to undergo those Suffer-

ings and Perſecutions, to which they were expoſed, with a Conſtancy and Force of Mind ſuperior to them. And to give the greater Weight and Confirmation to what he ſays, he ſpeaks it not as a Matter of Doubt, or *probable* Conjecture, but as a moſt aſſur'd and evident Truth.

And we know *that all things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the call'd according to his Purpoſe.*

To love God, and to be *call'd according to his Purpoſe*, are only different Expreſſions of the ſame Import and Signification. There are not two Expreſſions in the Bible more *appoſite*, or convertible: For whoever loves God, is *call'd according to his Purpoſe*; and whoever is *call'd according to his Purpoſe*, does for the ſame Reaſon love him. Except we could ſuppoſe with the *Calviniſts*, if it be not too ſhocking even to be mention'd, That God purpos'd from all Eternity to call the far greateſt Number of Chriſtians to the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, not *that they might be Holy and Unblameable before him* in Love, *Eph.* 1. 4. but only that by their neglecting ſo great Salvation, his Juſtice might take Occaſion to triumph, and diſplay it ſelf the more in their greater Damnation.

But indeed there is no Neceſſity of referring the Purpoſe here ſpoken of, directly or immediately to God. In the Original 'tis ſimply κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοῖς, to them who are call'd according to purpoſe: Which may be explain'd either with Reſpect to the Deſign of the Goſpel, and the Terms propoſed to us in it, or elſe to thoſe firm and ſettled Reſolutions of our own Hearts to obey God, which our taking upon us the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity ſuppoſes.

But whichſoever of theſe Senſes we explain the Words in, the Concluſion holds ſtill good, that the very Sufferings and Diſappointments of this Life, tho' grievous for the preſent in themſelves, yet upon the whole Matter, and all Things conſider'd, ſhall cer-

certainly turn to the Advantage of those who love God.

And this is what I shall endeavour to make appear in a more distinct and particular Manner from the two following Considerations.

First, That the Sufferings of those who love God, have of themselves a proper Tendency to promote their spiritual and supreme Good.

Secondly, That God is pleas'd to further this natural Tendency of them, by special Acts of his Providence and Grace.

First, The Sufferings of those who love God, have of themselves a proper Tendency to promote their spiritual and supreme Good. Yet I do not hereby intend, but that God may, and often does design, the Sufferings of those that love him, for their present Interest or Advantage; and that in the natural Order of Things it frequently happens, that our very Misfortunes by one unthought-of Casuality or other, prove the Occasion of the greatest temporal Felicity we enjoy in this World. There are few Persons but have had an Opportunity of observing how much and how often the Success of their Affairs has been more owing to Accident than Design, and that when they have had the least of Human Prospects, the secret Dispositions of Providence have been most favourable, and if I may so speak, fortunate to them.

I might exemplify this in the strange and surprizing Turns, which the Scriptures acquaint us with, in the Affairs of some of the best and greatest Persons, whose Names they record; and whose History in this Particular, was written without doubt for our Instruction; that where the Removal of any present Calamity is really for our Good, we may piously hope God in his due time will find means to remove it, tho'

we

we have no visible Prospect of our Deliverance from it.

This is what is signified to us by those Words of the Psalmist, *To the Upright there ariseth Light in the Darkness*, Ps. 112. 4. in the most dismal and disconsolate State of their Affairs; and when they see the least Appearance of it, God frequently opens to them a way to escape. And in the Language of another Prophet, *Gives unto them Beauty for Ashes, the Oyl of Joy for Mourning, the Garment of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness.*

But what will be the Consequence of a Change in our temporal Affairs, and whether we may make a good or ill Use of it, being known to God alone, who has a perfect View not only of all future Events, but of what would happen to us, under any *supposed* Circumstances, we ought not to presume on such special Interpositions of his Providence, nor even to desire them, but with the most absolute and entire Resignation to his Will.

This being premis'd, I shall consider the Tendency which the Sufferings of those that love God, have to promote their true and supreme Interest, in the following Respects.

1. As they are proper, to make us reflect on our past Conduct.

2. To humble our Pride and Vanity.

3. To make us more sensible of our Dependance on God.

4. To discover to us the Sincerity of our Love to God. And,

5. To raise our Thoughts to the Contemplation of a future and more perfect State of Happiness.

These visible Benefits of an afflicted State, have appear'd in such a Light to many pious and devout Christians, that they have earnestly desir'd of God to visit them with some sharp and sensible Affliction: Others have studied very strict and even *curious* Methods

thods of afflicting themselves. 'Twould undo a loose and effeminate Beau to tell him, How some of the greatest Figure in Church History, who were born to no inconsiderable Expectations in the World, and wanted not the means of *knowing* it, yet chose to withdraw from it into some dismal Solitude, where they liv'd after a most poor and austere Manner, not so much in want of the common Conveniencies, as the seeming Necessaries of Life.

How far God might approve their well-meant, tho' perhaps in some Instances, indiscreet Zeal, we do not take upon us to determine; neither do we recommend their Example at large to Imitation; what we would persuade Men to, is, That when God pleases to stretch forth his Hand, and touch them with any heavy Affliction, if they make the Improvement of it they ought, and which it naturally leads to, they will find according to their several Exigencies, one or more, or all these beneficial Effects of it I have mention'd.

1. An afflicted State is proper to make us reflect on our past Conduct. The best of Men, and whose Charity is the most inflam'd, have a great many private Failings and Escapes to account for: They are perhaps conscious too of some more notorious Sins, which yet they have not consider'd in all their aggravating and dangerous Circumstances.

Inconsideration is one ordinary Effect of an easy and opulent Condition. And the Sun-shine of Prosperity so dazzles the Mind, or fills it with foreign and sensible Amusements, that it has both less Capacity and Inclination for the spiritual Exercises of Religion.

But the Rod of Affliction is proper to awaken us out of this supine and indolent State; to make us look upwards towards God, whom we have offended, and backward, upon the Nature and Quality of

our

our Offences. This is the proper Use, all wise and pious Persons will make of their Afflictions; as God instructs us in those Words of the Prophet, *Mic. 6. 9. Hear the Rod, and who hath appointed it.* That is, take this Occasion to bring your own Ways to Remembrance, to consider wherein you have provok'd God Almighty, and wherefore *he contendeth with you.* It will be, in the first place, a natural Effect of his Fatherly Corrections, to enquire more narrowly, whether some more private Sins have not escap'd our Notice? Or if they have not, whether we have exercis'd a true and hearty Repentance for them?

Job, notwithstanding he insisted so much on his own Innocence, yet let fall several Expressions which intimate, that he had the Guilt of some lesser, and, probably till that time, less observ'd Sins lying upon his Conscience. Thus he confesses, *Chap. 7. 20. I have sinned, what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of Men?* And *Ver. 20. If I justify my self, mine one mouth shall condemn me.* And again, *Chap. 13. 23. How many are mine Iniquities, and my Sins? Make me to know my Transgression and my Sin.*

When therefore this Excellent Person stands so much up for himself; when he appeals with so great Confidence to God, in Testimony of his Innocence, *Thou knowest that I am not wicked*, Chap. 10. 7. in order to account for these seeming Inconsistencies, we must suppose, that tho' in the General Course of his Life he was a very Holy and Good Man, yet he was conscious to himself of many private Errors and Miscarriages, which probably in the Day of his Prosperity he had too slightly pass'd over his Accounts of. But his Sufferings, it appears, were a Means of making him enquire more particularly into the Reasons of them; of bringing him to Reflection, and *stirring him up* to the proper Exercises of Repentance for his Sins, by putting him in Remembrance of them.

Yet

Yet alas, Sins of Inadvertency and Surprize, or, as they are call'd, *of daily Incurſion*, are not the only Sins which good Men have been permitted to fall into. We find ſome of them in Scripture charg'd with Sins of the higheſt Nature, and with committing them deliberately. If the Afflictions then, which God lays upon us for our more private and ſecret Sins, be ſuch proper Monitors to Self-Examination and Repentance; how ſtrict and careful ought we to be in the Diſcharge of theſe Duties, when the Hand of God is upon us, and we are under the Apprehenſion of having committed ſome very great and grievous Crime, or Crimes, againſt him? As it will be natural for us on ſuch a moving Occaſion, to call our evil Ways more diſtinctly to Remembrance, ſo our Minds cannot but be fill'd with a *proportionable* Regret for them, and render the Burthen of them ſo much the more intolerable.

This was the Effect Holy *David* confeſſes which his Afflictions had upon him, *Pſal.* 38. 4. This made him take up that pious Reſolution, *v.* 18. *I will declare my Iniquity, and I will be ſorry for my Sin.* As if before the Hand of God preſſed him ſo ſore, he had been too remiſs in theſe Duties, and unwilling to give himſelf any Pain or Uneaſineſs about them.

They were the Troubles, as is uſually obſerv'd, which befel *Joſeph*'s Brethren in *Ægypt*, that awaken'd them into ſo lively and piercing a Senſe of their cruel Uſage towards him. Then their Conſciences, like ſome dreadful Flaſh of Lightning, flying in the Faces of all of them at once, ſeverally ſtruck them with Terror and Amazement. *And they ſaid one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our Brother*, (as if before they had been inſenſible of their Guilt) *in that we ſaw the Anguiſh of his Soul, when he beſought us, and we would not hear*; therefore *is this Diſtreſs come upon us*, Gen. 42. 21.

So

So forcible is the Power of Conſcience to put Men, when under the Preſſure of any great Affliction, not only upon reflecting what might be the particular Sin which provok'd God to lay it upon them, but upon conſidering further, after what manner, and with what degree of Malice or Defilement it was committed. As, Whether 'twas done deliberately, or againſt the common Sentiments and Obligations of Humanity; againſt wholſome and ſeaſonable Advice, or any extraordinary Reluctance of our own Minds: For theſe are Circumſtances, which are many times more galling and grievous to the Conſcience, than a Senſe of the Crime it ſelf.

Our Sufferings are ſtill the more apt to bring us to Reflection, when they are the direct and natural Conſequences of our Sins, or have any viſible Connection with them.

Thus *David*'s unlawful Commerce with *Bathſheba*, was not only puniſh'd with the Death of the Child he had by her, and for whoſe Recovery he was ſo impatient; but by the open and notorious Diſhonour that was done him, by *Abſalom*'s going in before all *Iſrael* to his Women, according to what God had threaten'd him by *Nathan* the Prophet, 2 *Sam.* 12. 11, 12.

And if we look back a little on the forecited Paſſage concerning *Joſeph*'s Brethren, we may obſerve, that the ſtinging Reflection there made by them, was particularly occaſion'd by *Joſeph*'s peremptory Demand, that one of them ſhould be left bound, as an Hoſtage, whilſt they went to bring their youngeſt Brother down to him. This brought their unnatural Treatment of *Joſeph*, and the Deſign they had form'd againſt his Life, directly Home to their Thoughts: For they ſeem to have been under an Apprehenſion, from the Conduct of *Joſeph* towards them, that he had a Deſign upon their own Lives, or that ſome of them at leaſt might fall a Sacrifice to his

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Suſpicion of their being Spies. This is highly probable from the Words of *Reuben*, v. 22. *Spake I not unto you, ſaying, Do not ſin againſt the Child; and ye would not hear? Therefore behold alſo his Blood is requir'd:* Or, therefore ſhall his Death, as ſome expound the Words, be reveng'd upon us by our own.

Yet I do not ſay, that the Sufferings of good Men always point directly at ſome particular Sin, or Sins they have been guilty of; for I am to ſhew in the Sequel, that there are a great many other good and wiſe Reaſons beſides that, which I am obſerving, why God ſhould viſit thoſe that love him, with his Fatherly Chaſtiſements. Yet if we narrowly enquire into the Nature of our Sufferings, or trace the Occaſion of them as far as we can, 'twill frequently appear to be the Deſign of God in them, *that we may know, that wherewithal a man ſinneth, by the ſame alſo ſhall he be puniſhed*, Wiſd. 11. 16. This was what the Author of that excellent Book ſo long ſince obſerv'd; and he grounds his Obſervation on Two or Three known and remarkable Facts; That God puniſh'd the Cruelty of the *Egyptians*, with turning their Rivers into Blood, and their Purſuit of *Iſrael* with their own Deſtruction; as he had done their Worſhipping *Serpents void of Reaſon, and vile Beaſts*, with the ſeveral Plagues of Frogs and Lice, of Flies and Locuſts, *v.* 6, 7, 15.

2*dly*, An afflicted State is proper to humble our Pride and Vanity. An uninterrupted Flow of Proſperity is apt, upon Two Accounts eſpecially, to give us high Airs, and inſpire us with great Thoughts of our ſelves. *Firſt*, As it flatters an Opinion we are in truth too forward at all times to entertain of our own Abilities: And, in the *Second* place, of the Power which Wealth has to command all Things.

As to the former of theſe Provocations to the Luſt of Pride, it hath been well obſerv'd, that how much ſoever Men are tempted to complain of the unequal

unequal Distributions of Providence towards them, with respect to the external Blessings of Life; yet few Men think, but they have at least a competent Share of the inward Endowments and Qualities of the Mind.

This Vanity of Thinking more highly of their own Parts and Capacities than they ought to think, runs thro' all Orders and Degrees of Men. So that could we see what fine Images of themselves Men paint upon their own Minds, and had no other way of making a Judgment of them, the Distinction of Learned and Illeterate, Wise and Foolish, would be from that Moment utterly confounded. Nay, as the greatest Cowards are observ'd to be the most noisy, and highest Pretenders to Courage, so those who have the least Capacity, have frequently the greatest Assurance of themselves.

And to do them right, there appears indeed to be some Reason, why ignorant Pretenders should be more assuming, than Men of a more extensive and acquir'd Knowledge: Because the farther Discoveries of Truth or Art any Person makes, he discovers the Compass of his Knowledge to be at the same time so much the narrower; there being nothing worth the Endeavour or Application of the Mind, but what in the Search after it occasionally gives us innumerable Hints of Things we were altogether Strangers to, and are glad to pass by, without taking any further Notice of.

There is this further Consideration to humble the Pride of much Learning, especially in Men of a copious and lively Thought; That the more extensive their Knowledge is, the more specious Appearances of Truth, and probable Conjectures on both Sides of the Question, are apt to distract and perplex them; and sometimes to confound them in such a manner, that they are willing to sit down quiet-

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ly, with ſuſpending their Judgment, and taking up with Uncertainty at laſt.

Shall we ſay then, that Men of Letters, becauſe they are conſcious for theſe Reaſons they ought to be modeſt, are therefore wholly free from this common *Féble* of human Nature, *Vanity?* No; Original Corruption diſcovers it ſelf in nothing more, than in this General Character of Mankind. The beſt of Men are not apt to be very much diſpleaſed in hearing themſelves decently flatter'd; and the wiſeſt of Men are not always able to diſſemble the Satisfaction they take in ſeeing themſelves eſteem'd.

So that whereas particular Perſons have their predominant Paſſions and Inclinations, ariſing from Natural Temperament, or the Evil Habits they have contracted; Vanity aſpires, as it were, to Univerſal Empire; and ſeems, if I may ſo ſpeak, to be the Complectional Vice of Human Race; and that from which, if all the other Paſſions of Human Nature do not take their Riſe, yet they commonly owe their Force, and more violent Diſorders to.

And as this was one Reaſon why the Son of God (the Deſign of whoſe Religion is to new-model *Human Nature*) laid the Foundation of it in Humility, ſo it diſcovers to us why this Virtue was ſo little thought of by the Philoſophers among the Heathens, and is indeed at this Day ſo little underſtood, yet leſs practiſed, by the generality of Chriſtians.

Now there is nothing feeds this Tumor of the Mind more, than when all Things ſucceed to our Expectations, and according to the Schemes we have laid. Succeſs, tho' nothing can be more fallacious than to argue from it, has a ſtrange Power to bribe and influence the Judgment, even in Favour of thoſe who have no direct or immediate Intereſt in it. If a General gain a Victory, tho' contrary to all the Maxims of military Prudence; yet his happy

Temerity shall be the Effect of a wise and wondrous Conduct. If a Minister, by Favour of some extraordinary Circumstances, succeed in a Design which was ill form'd, his Success shall notwithstanding be ascrib'd to deep Counsel and Design.

Yet a Man would be thought very whimsical and capricious, who should endeavour to argue against such popular and corrupt Judgments. The Multitude, who judge of Things according to Appearance, and do not look into the Reasons or Circumstances of them, will always declare on the Side of Fortune. But the wise and brave *Romans* governed themselves by other Maxims, when they blam'd *Lucullus* for the great and signal Overthrow which he gave *Tigranes*. And indeed, what could have been a greater Reproach to the Wisdom of that People, than to have approv'd an Action which ought not to have succeeded?

If we are so ready to flatter the Vanity of other Persons, upon the Success of their Designs, we shall not probably be less inclin'd to judge advantageously of our own Conduct, when Things succeed to our Measures: For the Motives upon which we are induc'd to esteem or admire other People, seldom lose any thing of their Force, when they are influenced and supported by Self-love.

How apt we are to bear our selves high upon the Success of our Designs, appears from those several Cautions in Scripture to the *Jews*; That they should not let their Hearts *be lifted up*, and *forget the Lord their God*, and say in their Hearts, *the might of their Hands had done*, what was his Work, *Deut.* 8. 17. That the wise Man should *not glory in his Wisdom*, but *in this, That he understandeth and knoweth that* God *is the* Lord, *who exerciseth Loving-kindness, Judgment, and Righteousness in the Earth*, Jer. 9. 23, 24. That is, who directs and over-rules all Things in this World, even the most casual Events, to what wise, and good, and just

juſt Ends, he ſees moſt proper. So that when our Deſigns, according to the Maxims of Human Prudence, ſeem to be the beſt concerted, yet one unexpected Accident or other often ſtarts up in our way, which utterly baffles and defeats them; but which tho' we could not foreſee or prevent, we ought to believe the Hand of God in them; becauſe the Happineſs or Misfortunes of Human Life, in a great Meaſure, depending on what we call Accidents; ſhould we exempt them from the Providence of God, ſeveral Events of the *greateſt* Conſequence to us in this World would befal us without his Diſpoſal. There are few Perſons who have not had an Opportunity of obſerving how often Chance rather than Deſign has contributed to favour their Endeavours; and that whatever Advantages Nature has given them, yet without what we call Fortune, they would have been able to do very little for them.

To ſhew us that all the Wit and Penetration, the Contrivance and Experience of Man, are but vain, when God does not favour them, it has been further obſerv'd, That almoſt in all Profeſſions, Men of the ſloweſt Parts, and loweſt Expectations, have very often the greateſt Share of fortunate Hits, and a ſmooth Run of Buſineſs; and that on the other Hand, it ſometimes happens that none are more embaraſs'd or perplex'd in their Affairs, or meet with ſo many Difficulties, as they who guard with the moſt Caution and Dexterity againſt them.

So that when Fortune, to ſpeak the common Dialect, deſigns to advance any Perſon, his very Errors and Failings become ſubſervient and inſtrumental to his Advancement: But when Providence, to ſpeak more juſtly, thinks fit to diſappoint the Deſigns of any Perſon, the very Meaſures which are laid with the greateſt Care and Art to effect them, frequently prove the Occaſion of obſtructing them.

'Tis said, that by these Methods of his Providence God brings Mankind more upon a Level, as to the external Blessings of Life, and so supplies what is defective one way by a more liberal Donation another. Tho' I am not certain indeed whether it be a true *Reflection*, That, "Whatever Difference there may "appear to be in Mens Fortunes, there is still a cer- "tain Compensation of Good and Ill in all, that "makes them equal.

It may however be piously admitted as one Reason, why the Advantages of Mind and Fortune are not always found together, That God by such a Disposition of his Providence brings Mankind nearer to a State of Equality. But no doubt, another Reason hereof is, That God by this means makes Men more sensible, that 'tis he who governs the World. That whatever *the Preparation of Mens Hearts* may be, yet 'tis he *who directeth their Steps*, who brings their Designs to Effect, or disappoints them as he thinks fit, *so that they are not able to perform.*

Yet vain and ungrateful Man, because he does not see the Action of God in the Conduct of his Designs, attributes the Success of them to his own Conduct; and so instead of doing Honour to God, arrogates Power and Wisdom, and a kind of Self-sufficiency to himself. Or if the Providence of God be not left wholly out of the Account, he has yet a Right at least, as he supposes, to share in the State of it, and to say, *My Hand is high, and the Lord hath not done* all this, *Deut.* 32. 27.

'Tis therefore a wise and worthy Design of God to make Man more sensible of his Vanity and Ingratitude, by shewing that *Time and Chance happen to all*; That the most consummate Wisdom of Men cannot always bring even their most probable Designs to bear, nor the nicest Precautions in the World obviate adverse Accidents.

Why

Why then ſhould we value our ſelves upon a Prudence which cannot ſecure to us the leaſt Event, and the Rules whereof have very often an accidental Tendence to fruſtrate the very End we propoſe and purſue by them? We ought notwithſtanding to act upon human Proſpects, and the moſt likely means of Succeſs; Becauſe God, for the Encouragement of Induſtry, ordinarily *wills* that they ſhould ſucceed: But we ought not to truſt too much to them, becauſe he *may* diſappoint them; and to humble ſuch a vain Confidence, frequently *does* diſappoint them.

Another Temptation to Pride and Vanity, is from the External Advantages of this World: That a proſperous and plentiful Condition contributes very much to our Eaſe and Comfort; That it frees us from many Calamities of Life, and puts us in a Capacity of being more uſeful Members of Society in ſeveral Reſpects, is the moſt needleſs thing in the World to be prov'd. And it was a very wiſe Deſign of the Providence of God, to prevent the ill Effects of an univerſal Idleneſs, that Plenty and Proſperity, the deſire of which is the main Spring of Induſtry, ſhould be attended with theſe Advantages. For Men are for the moſt part very ſlow and averſe to take Pains, where there is no Profit to be got.

But while we aſcribe to the outward Comforts and Conveniencies of Life, what is due to them, we muſt take *heed and beware* of repoſing too great Truſt and Confidence in them; and yet 'tis a Vanity too common under the Sun, for Men in a Flow of Proſperity to imagine they ſhall never be caſt down; or with the rich Man in the Goſpel, to bid defiance to all Misfortunes, and ſay, *Soul, now take thine Eaſe.* And yet 'tis probable, he was not the only Perſon under this agreeable Deluſion; I call it ſo, becauſe we eaſily believe what flatters our Self-love; and there is nothing we *covet* more than Power and Independency. Now experiencing that a plentiful Eſtate gives us

ſome Degree of Superiority above other People, and makes us in certain Reſpects *leſs* dependent, we are led to imagine, that we are out of the Reach of evil Accidents, and have nothing to fear.

We have, 'tis true, numerous Examples before us of the uncertain Changes and Turns of Fortune in the Affairs of other Men, or we ſee them in one Point or other uneaſy: But this does not diſcourage us; we look upon ſuch Accidents as foreign to our own Caſe, and at a Diſtance. Like Men who believe they ſhall *certainly* die, (and this was another Deluſion the Rich Man ſeems to have been under) yet do not apprehend or conſider themſelves the nearer Death for living the longer; ſo unwilling are we to apply the moſt evident Truths home, when they contradict or oppoſe the Motions of Self-love, ſupported by Pride.

To ſhew us how apt Men are to repoſe themſelves, and place their Security upon the outward Advantages of Life; *Job* puts the Queſtion in Vindication of himſelf, *Chap.* 31. 24. *If I have made Gold my Hope, or have ſaid to the fine Gold, thou art my* Confidence. *If I rejoyc'd becauſe my Wealth was great, or becauſe my Hand had gotten much.* For tho' he ſpeaks this to juſtify his own Conduct, yet the Words imply, that 'tis no extraordinary thing for Men in a ſuperior Condition of Life, to have their Hearts turn'd from the living God; to grow very vain and ſelf-confident, as if there were no coming at them by any thing, that may diſturb or take them down.

To abate this Pride of Man, God is pleaſed by proper Chaſtiſements, to make him ſenſible, that 'tis He who ruleth over all; that Riches and Honour come of Him; that he humbles and exalts; gives and takes away, and that there is no reſiſting his Will.

Sometimes therefore he deprives Men of what they place their chief Glory and Confidence in; At other times amidſt all the Pomp and Splendor, with which they

they are environ'd, he causes them to drink deep of the Cup of some personal or domestick Affliction. These are sensible Arguments to convince the most worldly-minded, how vain it is to trust in uncertain Riches; or if there could be any Foundation for such a Trust, how unable they still are to protect or secure them, from some of the greatest Evils incident to human Life.

But this leads me to consider in the next Place;

3. That Afflictions are proper to make us more sensible of our Dependance of God. And this indeed is a Consideration which naturally arises out of the former; for when we experience how vain a thing it is to trust in uncertain Riches, or any other Advantage in this World, what should we turn our Thoughts upon but *the Living God, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy?* 1 Tim. 6. 17. that is, all things we can desire, that are proper and convenient for us: And certainly if they be not so, we cannot think them desireable; tho' the Words may be commodiously, if they ought not primarily to be interpreted, of the inward Joys and Consolations of his Spirit, which God vouchsafes to good Men in their greatest Distresses. 'Twas with these special Favours of his Grace God visited *David*, when all human Prospects and Supports were given over. So himself confesses, *Psal.* 73. 25, 26. *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And there is none upon Earth I desire besides thee. My Flesh and my Heart faileth; but God is the Strength of my Heart and my Portion for ever.* Again, *Psal.* 94. 19. *In the Multitude of my Thoughts within me, thy Comforts delight my Soul.*

The Sense of his Dependance on God, together with that of the inward Delights of Grace, made this Holy Person give himself up so continually to Prayer, and inflam'd his Devotions to so great a Height; and it is to his Troubles which we owe a very considerable Part of them: For it seems to have

been a ſettled Rule to him, when any Calamity befel him, to fly to God immediately for Help; or rather we are aſſur'd, that this was the Rule he preſcrib'd himſelf, from his own Words; *I will cry unto God with my Voice, even unto God will I cry with my Voice.——In the Time of my Trouble I ſought the Lord.—— When I am in Heavineſs I will think upon God.——Then cry'd I unto thee, O Lord, and got me to my Lord right humbly*, Pſal. 77. 1, 2, 3. 30. 8.

Indeed this natural Flight and Application of the Soul to God in any great Diſtreſs, that requires *ready Help*, does not only diſcover it ſelf in good Men, whoſe Piety gives them greater Confidence towards him; but even the moſt profligate Sinners, who have queſtion'd with themſelves, What is the Almighty that we ſhould fear him? Or who have in their Works deny'd him: Yet when Anguiſh and Diſtreſs come upon them under the Apprehenſion of any great and imminent Danger; theſe very Enemies, I ſay, of God, find themſelves on ſuch Occaſions very ſtrongly, I had almoſt ſaid invincibly mov'd to call upon him, and take Sanctuary in his Eternal Power and Godhead.

And it may be queſtion'd, whether any Perſon under violent Circumſtances of Diſtreſs, and in his right Senſes, was ever able wholly to ſuppreſs this natural Motion of the Soul to God, whatever he pretended.

'Tis reported indeed of a known and famous *Profeſſor* of Atheiſm, that as ſoon as the Flames, to which he was condemn'd for his Blaſphemies, touch'd him, he ſhrunk a little back and cry'd out, *O God, O God!* And tho' upon his being order'd by thoſe, who had the Charge of the Execution, to be withdrawn, the Queſtion was put to him, whether he now relented, and would procure his Pardon by a Recantation; he obſtinately refuſed the Condition, and

pretended

pretended, that 'twas nothing but a Word of course which fell from him, as Oaths and Imprecations insensibly do many times from those who really believe a God. Yet this Instance, after all, I take it, is not so proper to overthrow what has been observ'd, as to shew the strange and unaccountable Extravagancies, which Vanity sometimes pushes Men upon: For had not that been the predominant Passion of this Atheistical *Hero*, is it probable, that he who believ'd nothing of a future State, or the moral Distinction of Virtue and Vice, would have strain'd at a little Dissimulation to save his Life from a cruel and *present* Death? 'Tis much more probable, that he dissembled his real Sentiments, to save himself the Vain-glory, the vainest certainly that ever enter'd into Man's Heart, of *dying hard*.

But as to the Consideration I am upon, we need only consult our own Experience, if the Love of God have reign'd in our Hearts as it ought, whether in any very dangerous or other afflicting Circumstances, the Spring of our Soul has not been as it were fortify'd, and in the Motion of our Desire towards him we have not felt a more than ordinary Force and Activity? Or whether God has not sometimes been pleas'd, in a more sensible manner, to make bare his everlasting Arms, and stand, if I may so speak, as if he were extending them towards us.

I have already observ'd what Effect the Sufferings of *David* had upon him, in turning his Heart to God, and tuning all the Powers of his Soul to the noblest and most exalted Strains of Devotion. *Job* felt the same blessed Effect from his Afflictions; *I would*, says he, *seek unto God, and unto God will I commit my Cause.——Surely, I would speak to the* Almighty.—— *I will speak in the Bitterness of my Soul; I will say* unto God, *do not condemn me. I have heard of thee, by the Hearing of the Ear; but* now *mine Eye seeth thee*, Ch. 5. 8. 10. 1, 2. 13. 3. 42. 5.

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The Friends of this Holy Perſon, who came to comfort him, tho' they appear on ſome Occaſions to have reaſon'd leſs juſtly and from popular Prejudices, yet had right Sentiments, not only of the Power of God to ſupport, but of his Goodneſs to adminiſter theſe inward Conſolations to thoſe that love him, under the moſt preſſing Calamities; and therefore they adviſe *Job*, above all things, to enter into a ſtrict and intimate Correſpondence with him; *Acquaint* now *thy ſelf with him, and be at Peace*, Chap. 22. 21.

As I cannot go thro' the ſeveral Particulars I propoſed to ſpeak to at this time, I ſhall conclude with a ſhort Recommendation of the ſame Rule to all the Sons and Daughters of Affliction; as preſcribing the beſt and ſhorteſt Method, in order to enable them to bear their Sufferings patiently, and with a Mind entirely reſign'd to God.

For to acquaint our ſelves with him, is not merely to contemplate the Eternal Excellencies and Perfections of his Nature, to reaſon in a ſubtle manner on the Order of his Providence or Grace; to diſtinguiſh nicely upon the Doctrines or Duties of Religion; or to be able to reſolve difficult Caſes of Conſcience. All theſe things have their Uſe; but as the moſt wicked Men, out of a natural Deſire of Knowledge, joyn'd with a fine Capacity, do ſometimes excel in them; and probably, as the Devil himſelf, with his Angels, would far out-do the moſt refin'd Wit, or profound *Clerk* in the World, in point of mere Speculation upon theſe Subjects; ſo they can, of themſelves, be no Argument of our being acquainted with God in ſuch a manner, as to give us any particular Favour or Intereſt in him.

Neither is our entertaining Venerable and Honorary Thoughts of God, to have that Acquaintance with him, which in the Day of Adverſity, is the Founda-

Foundation of our Truſt and Confidence in him: For we may highly value Merit in Perſons we have no Relation to, or any Expectations from. The moſt wicked Men therefore, will ſometimes be willing to offer God this ſlight Sacrifice of an inward Veneration, and pay him the Duties of *ſimple* Eſteem; even thoſe who deny his Providence, or that they have any Dependance on him, and maintain that he no ways concerns himſelf in the Affairs of Men, yet will grant, that we ought to think of him with Reverence and Honour, out of pure Reſpect to the Dignity and Excellency of his own Nature.

But to acquaint our ſelves with God, imports ſomething more than a general Knowledge of him, or paying him the Duties of ſimple Eſteem; 'tis to make him our Friend, by conforming every Motion of our Hearts to his Will, as well as by entertaining our Minds with high and bright Ideas of his Power and Wiſdom, and the other Glorious Attributes of his Nature, it is to have the ſame Inclinations, the ſame Deſigns and Intereſts with him; it is not only to conſider him as the moſt Amiable and Excellent Being in himſelf, but in the Relation he bears to us; 'tis to look upon him as having a particular Concern for our Good and Happineſs, and to be able in all our Prayers and Addreſſes to him, to ſay ſeverally with an humble Confidence, *My God, and my Lord*; in a word, it is to have our Souls at once fill'd with Light and Love, with Grace and Truth; and in a *lively* manner to *taſte* and *ſee* how good and gracious the Lord is.

And if our Acquaintance with God give us, as it certainly will, if we ſeek it as we ought, theſe inward Aſſurances of his Favour; if in their ſevereſt Tryals he is thus pleaſed to make Light ſpring up to the Upright, and joyful Gladneſs to ſuch as are true-hearted, why ſhould we faint under any Affliction

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he is pleaſed to lay upon us? Or what can harm us, ſo long as we have his Countenance and Approbation; whoſe Will nothing can reſiſt, and the Deſigns of whoſe Wiſdom and Goodneſs towards us nothing can prevent? *If God*, as the Apoſtle argues, *ver.* 31. *be for us, who*, or what, *can be againſt us?* But if he be againſt us, alas, what Comfort or Satisfaction can we take in any thing beſides? Let us then, whenever we are under any afflicting Circumſtances ſeek to *him*, as our only Saviour. Let us acquaint our ſelves *now* with him, and be at Peace.

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SERMON X.

A Continuation of the ſame Subject, with ſeveral uſeful Inferences from it.

ROM. VIII. 28.

And we know that all Things work together for good, to them that love God, to them who are the call'd according to his Promiſe.

I Proceed, according to the Method wherein I propoſed to diſcourſe of theſe Words, to a Fourth Advantage of an afflicted State; namely,

4*thly*, That 'tis proper to diſcover to us the Sincerity of our Love to God.

Men that have no true Senſe of Religion, will perform many Duties of it, not only with Cheerfulneſs, but ſome Degree of Zeal, when they find their Account in them, and are under no Trouble or Diſtraction of Mind. For indeed Religion, in moſt of the Branches of an *Active* Obedience, is ſo highly reaſonable in it ſelf, and ſo adapted to ſome of the ſtrongeſt Paſſions of Human Nature, as well as our

our present Interests; that, considering how deceitful the Heart of Man is, 'tis not always easy to distinguish, upon what Motives our good Resolutions are form'd, or our good Actions proceed. For we are sometimes apt to imagine, that we are serving God, and doing our Duty, when we are only pursuing our Advantage, or consulting our Inclination.

But the *Passive* Duties of Religion, when we are call'd upon to exercise them, are the true and proper Trials of our Love; they shew whether Religion has really any Power over us, and what we are at the Bottom.

The Hope of Reward, the Fear of Punishment; the Desire of Praise, the Awe of Superiors; a Sense of Shame, Natural Temper, and the like, may excite us to offer some slight Sacrifices to God, in certain External, and less difficult Instances of Obedience. There is nothing more ordinary, than for very wicked Men to put on the Appearance of Sanctity and Religion, by practising those Duties which cost them nothing, or give them little or no Interruption in the Pursuit of their Criminal Pleasures and Designs.

The Devil was so sensible, how great a Share these Human Views and Motives sometimes have in the Religion of those who are reputed very good Men, that he much suspected whether *Job* were really the perfect and upright Man that he appear'd to be; and therefore put the Question with so great Confidence to God, *If Job served* him *for nought?* As if he had said, Are not all these Temporal Blessings *Job* enjoys, and which he considers either as the Natural or Providential Effects of his Piety, sufficient to engage him in the exterior Service of Religion, and make him practise some outward and commendable Duties, without any sincere and truly Religious Disposition of Mind, separate from a merce-

mercenary Temper, and a ſpecial Regard to his own Intereſts?

In order therefore to bring the Religion of *Job* to the Teſt, the great Enemy of Mankind, who knows how apt we are to be impoſed upon by Human Appearances of Virtue, moves God Almighty that he would put forth his Hand, and touch all that this reputed Saint had, and then it would ſoon appear, how well his Religious Pretences were grounded, and what they would come to. And though the Event ſhew'd, that the old Serpent, with all his Wiſdom, was in this Particular out of his Calculation, and miſtook his Man; yet what he propoſed was not without a reaſonable Foundation, but proceeded upon what he had frequently obſerv'd, that Proſperity is apt to caſt a falſe Luſtre on the Actions of Men, and even to hide many Faults and Imperfections both from themſelves and others, which Adverſity ſeldom fails to diſcover.

And therefore, Afflictions in Scripture are repreſented by God's *tempting* and *proving* Men, and trying their *Hearts*, as *Gold is try'd in the Furnace*, Prov. 17. 3. *Job* makes uſe of the ſame Alluſion: *When he hath try'd me, I ſhall come forth as Gold*, Chap. 23. 10.

Our Bleſſed Saviour, tho' he perfectly knew what was in Man, and what way he would take, yet as it was neceſſary that thoſe who embraced the Goſpel, ſhould alſo know whether they acted upon ſincere Motives; becauſe the Profeſſion of it would expoſe them to ſo many ſevere Trials; for this Reaſon, I ſay, he told them beforehand what they were to expect. He did not go about to invite Men into his Service, by ſpecious Pretences of advancing them, or taking Care of their Intereſts in this Life (the uſual Method of thoſe who have ill Deſigns, and would engage others in them); but he gave them plainly to underſtand, that whoever would be his Diſciple, *ſhould deny himſelf, and take up his Croſs*. This, as it

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gave a great Confirmation to the Truth of his Holy Religion, so 'twas a proper Test to discover whether his Followers were truly disposed to adhere firmly to him, or in time of Temptation to fall away, and walk no more with him.

When the young Man, who came to enquire of him what he might do to inherit Eternal Life, was put to this Test; tho' he had perform'd many good Duties, and discover'd himself to be a Person of very good Dispositions; yet then it appear'd, something was still wanting to perfect the Sincerity of them. And upon this our Lord took occasion to observe, how hard, or rather impossible it was for a rich Man, without the special Grace of God, *to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, Mat. 19. 23, 24. that is, to take upon him the Profession of the Christian Religion. For in this Sense we are here, as is plain from the Context, to understand the Kingdom of Heaven; as we are in these other Passages I refer you to, *Mat.* 3. 2. 10. 7. 13. 11, 24.

To *profess* this holy Religion sincerely, there was not only requir'd the greatest Self-denial and Humility, as it denotes Poverty of Spirit, unknown Duties to rich Men in their natural State, and in Truth to a great Number of those who call themselves Christians: But when the Kingdom of Heaven was first preach'd, it was a further necessary Condition of entring into it, that Men should be oblig'd to part with their Riches, to sacrifice their nearest and dearest Interests in this Life, if the Cause or Interests of Christianity might be thereby advanced.

I know these Words may piously be *apply'd* to shew, how apt Christians, who flow in Wealth and Plenty, are to be corrupted by them; and so by Consequence to forfeit their Title to that blessed and glorious State, which the Scripture more commonly expresses by the Kingdom of Heaven. And this should teach rich Men, considering the Temptations they are surround-

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ed with, to be the more Circumſpect, and keep a ſtricter Guard upon themſelves. But let us not terrify and diſmay them too much, by thundering out a Paſſage indiſtinctly againſt them, which at preſent does not directly affect them, but only by way of a pious Conſtruction. It being the original Deſign of theſe Words, *How hardly ſhall they that have Riches enter into the Kingdom of Heaven?* &c. to ſhew, that in the Infancy of the Church, rich Men would with great Difficulty be brought to embrace Chriſtianity; nay, that 'twould be impoſſible for them to do it, without the ſpecial Grace of God, upon thoſe hard Conditions, as they then appear'd, of forſaking all to follow Chriſt; of parting with Houſes and Lands, and Wives and Children, yea, and Life it ſelf for his ſake.

We are not now, thank God, expos'd to theſe ſevere Trials; yet there are few who love God, whom he does not one Time or other, or in one Degree or other, exerciſe with ſome trying Affliction. And the Sum of all is, That whether we are perſecuted for Righteouſneſs ſake, or viſited with any other Calamity, to keep the Mind erect towards God under it, and to be able to ſerve him cheerfully, when he ſeems moſt to abſent himſelf, and hide his Face from us, without giving way to impatient and deſponding Thoughts; why, this is at once the moſt generous and Heroic Inſtance of our Chriſtian Obedience, and the moſt bright and comfortable Evidence that we are ſincere in diſcharging it.

5*thly* and laſtly, to raiſe our Thoughts to the Contemplation of a future and more perfect State of Happineſs. For the Deſire of Happineſs in all Men is invincible. 'Tis through a Miſapplication of this very Deſire, that in truth Men render themſelves everlaſtingly miſerable: For they find ſome ſort of Happineſs, ſuch as it is, in gratifying their ſinful Paſſions

and they feel a certain Pain and Uneasiness in opposing them. Now as they would be happy, and always actually happy, they blindly prefer the Pleasures of Sin, which at the Instant they are sensibly mov'd and affected with, to the Expectation of a future Happiness, which seems to lie at a great Distance, and which they have at present no sensible *Taste* of. For the same Reason, they chuse rather to avoid the present Pain of denying themselves and their ungodly Lusts, than to take those ungrateful Methods as they appear, which Religion prescribes them, of getting to Heaven, and fleeing *from the Wrath to come.*

Nay, when the Terrors of the Lord, as they sometimes do, set themselves in Array against the Awakened Conscience of very notorious Sinners, and make them with *Judas* attempt to relieve themselves, by putting a Period to their wretched and miserable Condition: This very Action, which throws them headlong into the Flames of Hell, proceeds at the Bottom from the general Inclination they have to be happy, or however to be less unhappy. They suppose probably, that the Soul in a separate State may not feel those grievous and stinging Reflections, which she does at present; but there is much greater Reason to believe, on the other side, That when the Soul is enlarged, and acts with her full Force out of the Body, she will both see her Misery in a clearer Light, and feel it in a more powerful Manner.

An Inclination to be at Rest is common therefore to the best and the worst of Men. And tho' we sometimes seek our Happiness where it cannot be found, being amus'd and impos'd upon by false Appearances of it, yet still we act upon this general Principle, and cannot indeed do otherwise.

To prevent such dangerous Mistakes in good Men, whereby their Minds may be blinded with the Love of this present World, or they may be tempted to think

think from an uninterrupted Prosperity, that *'tis good for them to be here*, God is pleas'd by some wholsome Chastisement to imbitter the Enjoyments of Life to them, and sometimes by a long continued Series of one Trouble upon another. This wise Method, in Proportion as it makes them more sensible of the Vanity of this deceitful World, raises their Desires, and carries their Views forward, towards that blessed and glorious State, which God has prepared for those that love him, and wherein alone they can find Rest to their Souls.

Aristotle in his *Ethicks* makes it an Argument, why Men are design'd to act for some End, because their *Desires* carry them towards it. For Nature, says he, which is here only to be consider'd as another Name for God, does nothing in vain. Had this Philosopher improv'd this Consideration, as he might have done, or follow'd it but a little further, 'twould have led him into a Proof and Conviction, upon his own Principles, of a future State. For he could not have supposed, that God had given Men such strong, such invincible Desires and Inclinations towards Happiness, without putting them in some Method and Capacity of attaining it; which yet his own Experience plainly discover'd to him, was not attainable in this Life. It had then been a most natural and easy Consequence, that there is another Life wherein it may be attain'd.

What I am observing, is, That this Desire of a future Happiness seldom operates, even in good Men, with greater Force, than when they sensibly feel, that they are here in a painful and uneasy State; or when they seriously reflect upon it, that this World is so far from affording them any solid or perfect Happiness, that were it not for further and higher Expectations, there would be nothing to reconcile them, I do not say to the present Sufferings and Troubles, but to the very Enjoyments of Life. But when we consi-

der, that they are not only in themſelves unſatisfactory, but very uncertain and precarious; that any bodily Diſorder, or Inquietude of Mind from within, any croſs Accident or Diſappointment Abroad, and ſometimes even a cloudy Day is ſufficient to ſpoil our Taſte of them: Such Conſiderations have a natural, and, one would think indeed, a neceſſary Tendence, to raiſe our Thoughts up to that happy, that ever happy State, whereof the loweſt Repreſentation that the Scripture give us, is, That a final Period will be put in it to all the Troubles and Miſeries of this World: That *God will then wipe away all Tears from our Eyes, and there ſhall be no more Death, neither Sorrow nor Crying, neither ſhall there be any more Pain*, Rev. 21. 4.

This is only a negative Deſcription of the State of the Bleſſed; the Goſpel in other Places raiſes our Ideas of it infinitely beyond an *Epicurean* State of Indolence. A Happineſs neither ſuited to the Organs of the Body, nor the Powers of the Soul; both which, as *Plutarch* very well obſerves, in Confutation of that abſurd Notion of *Epicurus*, are viſibly made and fitted *for* Action.

But the Goſpel, I ſay, further repreſents that future Happineſs, for which we were originally made and deſign'd, as abounding with all the Delights and Satisfactions proper to the ſeveral Faculties and Powers of a glorify'd Soul, acting in a glorify'd Body. And tho' 'tis true, we have no perfect or adequate Idea of this glorious State, yet we know in general ſo much of it, that 'tis the moſt deſirable Object of our Thoughts, and *that the Sufferings of this preſent World are not worthy to be compar'd to it.*

We know, in a word, but this Conſideration never comes ſo home to us as in the Day of Adverſity, that we are here as in a State of Exile, and in a barren and dry Land, where no Water is; this ſhould, and certainly will, if we have any true Love for God, or

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for our ſelves, inſpire us with ſecret Deſires and Impatiencies to quench our Thirſt at thoſe Rivers of Pleaſure, which water the City of God, and flow at his Right Hand for evermore. The Sufferings of *David* had this Effect too upon him: He wiſhes that he had the *Wings of a Dove*, upon which he *might flee away and be at reſt*, Pſ. 55. 6. And again, *My Soul thirſteth for God, for the Living God, when ſhall I come and appear before God*, Pſ. 42. 2.

Theſe are the genuine Effects and Benefits of Afflictions, when thoſe that love God are viſited with them. I proceed in the next Place to ſhew,

Secondly, That God is pleas'd to further this natural Tendency of them, by ſpecial Acts of his Providence and Grace.

1. Our Afflictions not ſpringing out of the Duſt, but coming from the Hand of God, and being wiſely deſign'd by him for ſome good End to us, we may comfortably aſſure our ſelves, that he will wiſely diſpoſe all Accidents and Events in ſuch a manner, as may moſt effectually conduce *to* that End.

We cannot indeed always ſee the particular Reaſons of God's providential Diſpenſations towards us, becauſe we do not know the Dependency which one thing has upon another, and what would follow upon our being put under ſuch Circumſtances. 'Tis from our Ignorance of this, that we often deſire with the greateſt Impatience, and think our ſelves happy in the Enjoyment of ſuch Things, as in the Conſequence draw a Train of many ſad Calamities after them. We think our ſelves at other times, very unhappy under ſuch Diſappointments, as terminate at laſt viſibly to our Advantage.

For God who perfectly knows the Order of Cauſes and Events, and ſees what, all things conſider'd, and upon the whole Matter will be really good for us, is pleas'd to lay the Scheme of his Providence accordingly; and ſometimes to open the Deſign of it

in so plain, but withal so beautiful a Manner, as particularly discovers, that those very Things, which gave us the most melancholly and disconsolate Apprehensions, *were meant to us for Good.*

The Providence of God, at other times, orders Matters so, that in Proportion to the Greatness of our Affliction in one kind; for the better Support of our Patience and Trust in him, he alleviates it with some special Blessing or Advantage in another Kind. You are afflicted with the Loss of a Child, or which perhaps is more afflicting to you, you never had any; but you have acquir'd a plentiful Estate, and have thereby the Means, if you have but the Heart to improve them, of exercising a more ample and diffusive Charity; of dispersing more liberally abroad, and giving to the Poor, and doing Good on Occasions which are continually presenting themselves: An Advantage, which if you have not apply'd to these Ends for which God design'd it, you are with all your Wealth as yet a Stranger to one of the greatest, one of the most sensible and generous Pleasures of Human Life. Or perhaps your Condition is the very Reverse of this: You have Inclinations to good and beneficient Actions, but no Capacity; a great Charge of Children, but little or nothing to support them; yet you would not want these Blessings, or any of them; and remember withal, 'tis a much greater Blessing, that God has given you those good Inclinations, than if you had gain'd the whole World without them.

I might observe the like Compensations of Providence, with respect to all the other Evils, Defects, or Misfortunes incident to us in this Life; but the special *Grace* of God, as I am further to observe, does also co-operate to render the Afflictions of good Men beneficial to them. For,

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2. When he appoints us to the Combat, he proportions his Assistances to the Nature and Difficulties of the Service: He does not leave us to fight it out with our own Forces; as a famous Prince of our own is said to have declin'd relieving his Son, in one of the most Glorious Actions this Nation can boast, that he might have the Honour of the Day wholly to himself. No, were this our Case, all the fine Sayings of all the Philosophers put together, upon Fortitude and Constancy, would avail very little to support us under our Sufferings. God therefore, who knows our Weakness and Frailty of our Nature, is always pleas'd to send his *Staff* with his *Rod*, and to grant us such Strength and Protection, as may support us in all Dangers, and carry us through all Adversities.

Nay, when we consider the advantageous Things, spoken in the Gospel, of an afflicted State, it seems as if God design'd it for the proper Post of Honour to those whom he more particularly favours, or would set some known Mark of Distinction upon; and therefore when they are commanded to it, so they do what is incumbent on them, nothing, to be sure, will be wanting that is necessary to their Relief or Support.

I shall now proceed to make some useful Inferences from what has been said, and so conclude.

And 1*st*, If Afflictions have both in their own Nature a Tendency to promote our Good, and be design'd by God to this End, then we have great Reason to be patient and resign'd under them: As in other Cases, the Prospect of any great and certain Advantage will make us chearfully undergo many Difficulties, and even expose our selves to many visible and imminent Dangers.

And I draw the Parallel from such Cases, because as nothing can be of greater Benefit to us than what

is so design'd for us by God, so nothing is more certain, than that the Means he employs are always adapted to the End he proposes.

What then, if as the Apostle observes, no Suffering for the present be joyous, but grievous? Yet so long as we know in general, that all things will end well at last, as they certainly will, if we do not obstruct the Design of them our selves; then we must grant, instead of repining or being impatient under our Afflictions, we have much Reason to be satisfy'd with our Condition, and even to bless God for it.

What again, if we are not able to find out the Work of God from the Beginning to the End? What if his Ways are sometimes past finding out, and the particular Methods of his afflicting us do not appear to us in all the Reasons of them? Yet let us not give way to any anxious or distrustful Thoughts of him, so long as we are assur'd, that he knows and wills what, all things consider'd, is really best for us; and that, all his Ways *are Mercy and Truth to such as keep his Covenant and his Testimonies*, Psal. 119. 75.

When our Affairs lie in the Hands of any Person of known Ability and Affection to us, we promise our selves a good Account from his Conduct and Management, and leave the Measures upon which he proceeds to himself; yet the wisest of Men may be deceiv'd in their Measures, and the most faithful of our Friends, by one Accident or other, be unable to effect what they design for us: But God is wise in Heart and mighty in Strength. Nothing can elude his Wisdom, or resist his Will; he perfectly comprehends the Progress and Powers of second Causes, and over-rules them to what Ends and Purposes he pleases.

So that we are not to be surpriz'd, if we be not able to penetrate into the Reasons of his Conduct towards us; if he appear sometimes even to go about in the Execution of his Designs, as he did in leading

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the Children of *Iſrael* thro' the Wilderneſs, when there was a nearer and readier Paſſage to the Promis'd Land: And had that People been left to their own Meaſures, without Queſtion they would have taken the direct *Rout* to it. But God had wiſe Reaſons for his own Method: The *Jews* by the many ſignal Dangers they were expos'd to, and the no leſs ſignal Deliverances that were wrought for them in their way to the Land of Promiſe, and at laſt by taking Poſſeſſion of it after having ſuffer'd ſo many Afflictions for the Space of Forty Years; by this means, I ſay, they were poſſeſs'd with a more awful Senſe of God's Providence, which is the great Foundation of all Religion. *Moſes* accordingly aſſigns it as the Reaſon why God ſuffer'd them to go aſtray ſo long in the Wilderneſs, and as the *Pſalmiſt* expreſſes it, *out of the Way*, namely, *that he might humble them, and that he might prove them, to do them good at their latter End*, Pſal. 107. 4. Deut. 8. 16.

2*dly*, If God deſign Afflictions for our good, then if we would not oppoſe or fruſtrate his Deſign in them, we muſt endeavour to profit by them: For, like all other Means of Piety, they do not operate of themſelves to our Advantage, without our own Concurrence; but as in the *Red-Sea*, the *Jews* found their Deliverance and the *Egyptians* their Deſtruction; ſo, according to our different Qualities or Diſpoſitions, they will have different Effects upon us.

If we find, that they have put us upon examining more ſtrictly into the State of our Souls; *that* our Pride or Vanity has been humbled by them; *that* they have made us more ſenſible of our Dependance on God; *that* they have diſcover'd to us the Sincerity of our Love to God; or *that* they have been inſtrumental in weaning our Affections from this *World*, and raiſing them more to the Deſire of Heaven and heavenly Things; then we may comfortably hope, that

that the Design of God has been effected in them, and that we are so much the wiser and better for them.

But if, on the other Hand, we do not experience in our selves these good Effects from our Afflictions; if neither our Vices are reform'd, nor our Graces improv'd by them: Particularly, if we still continue in the Practice of any Sin, or impenitent for it, which the Nature of our Sufferings more directly points to: Ah! then instead of our profiting by our Afflictions, they have only discover'd our incorrigible Temper, and prov'd the Occasion of provoking the Anger and Displeasure of God so much the more.

The Prophet represents those who are insensible of the Judgments of God, when his Hand is upon them, as at once the most obstinate of Sinners, and the most ignorant of the Methods of Divine Providence. Thus he expostulates with God, concerning them, *O Lord, are not thine Eyes upon the Truth? Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved: Thou hast consumed them, but they have refus'd to receive Correction; they have made their Faces harder than a Rock; they have refus'd to return: Therefore, I said, surely these are poor, they are* foolish; *for they know not* the Way *of the Lord, nor the Judgment of their God.*

The Character of *Pharaoh* was very agreeable to this Description: And therefore 'tis no Wonder, if the Afflictions God sent upon him, occasion'd, by degrees, his final Obdurancy. Some indeed have interpreted those Words, *and God hardned Pharaoh's Heart*; as if it were by a positive Act of God's Will, that his Heart was hardned, and that this was the Intention of God in afflicting him; which is to say, That the Providence of God may be directly, and *designedly* subservient to the Sins of Men; than which, nothing can be said more to the Dishonour of his Providence,

vidence, or which tends more to make Men queſtion the Belief of it.

'Tis a far more pious and reaſonable Interpretation of theſe Words; to ſay, That they are not to be underſtood of the *Deſign* of God in thoſe dreadful Plagues, wherewith he viſited *Pharaoh*, but of the accidental Effect they had upon him; that is, God might, in an *improper* Senſe, be ſaid to harden *Pharaoh*'s Heart, as thoſe Plagues were *the Occaſion* of hardning it.

Our Saviour ſpeaks after the ſame Manner, when he ſays, *He came not to ſend Peace upon Earth, but a Sword:* 'Tis certain his real Deſign and Intention was to promote Peace on Earth, Good-will towards Men; and not to ſet them at Varience, by ſowing the Seeds of Enmity and Diviſion among them; but only as he foreſaw his Religion would *occaſionally* produce theſe Effects, he ſpeaks after a Manner, as if he had really come to produce them himſelf.

But tho', out of regard to the Honour of God, and the Holineſs and Goodneſs eſſential to him, we cannot ſuppoſe him deſignedly hardning Sinners, by any afflicting Circumſtances his Providence brings them under; it concerns us however, in an afflicted State, to humble our ſelves under his mighty Hand, leſt inſtead of reforming, by *revolting more and more*, we prove the wretched Inſtruments at laſt of *hardning* our ſelves.

3*dly*, If Afflictions have ſo proper a Tendence to promote our Spiritual Good, 'twill concern us by reaſonable Acts of Mortification and Self-denial, frequently to afflict our ſelves. As the Wiſdom of God has, on many Occaſions, preſcrib'd this Method in the Holy Scriptures, ſo the beſt and holieſt of Men have, in all Ages, practis'd it. St. *Paul*, tho' he gives us ſuch a large Catalogue of his Sufferings and Afflictions, and *Perils* from without, 2 *Cor.* 11. 27. ſo large

large indeed, that we justly wonder how he was able to bear and go thro' them all; yet does not omit to mention among them the voluntary Pains and Restraints he laid upon himself. He tells in another Place, as if all the Difficulties and Dangers to which he was expos'd, had not been sufficient to keep his Bodily Appetites under a due Regulation, what Rules he piously and strictly observ'd to this End, 1 *Cor.* 9. 27.

The Reason of afflicting our selves by such voluntary Acts of Piety, appears from hence: That the Soul and the Body, in our present State, have very different Inclinations and Interests; they are continually clashing and fighting with one another; the Body never moves nor speaks but for the Body; that is, in order to gratify some Appetite proper to it: And the Soul, which originally govern'd the Body with an absolute Sway, and could at any time put a stop to its Motions, or silence it, rarely does any thing now without first advising with it; and not often without following its Advice. The Primitive Order of Nature is in great Measure inverted: And if the Bodily Appetites do not absolutely reign, yet whenever they apprehend themselves slighted or hardly used, they pretend at least a Right to resist. Nay, their Insolence is sometimes so great, that they treat Reason with Disdain and Roughness, and expect she should not only connive at, but justify their Irregularities; like a Regent Ministry, that has wholly engross'd the Power, and makes use of the Prince's Name, to sign their unjust Orders.

That we may reinstate Reason in her Throne, that we may see her again in the full Possession of her Original and Just Rights, 'tis necessary that the Passions should be mortify'd and disabled from making the same rebellious Attempts for the future. To this End we must sacrifice the Body, to which they owe

owe their Force: We must bind this strong Man, and make him sensible of the Violence and Disorders he has been guilty of; we must shew him, if we can, that his Strength is, to sit still. There can be no other way of settling or confirming Reason in her New Empire; 'tis not enough for her to advise, or remonstrate: No, the Passions are grown heady, too heady for such mild and gently Usage.

These are the Reasons why we ought to mortify the Body, with the Affections and Lusts: But not to pursue them any further by Metaphorical Allusions, they are in general confirm'd by the greatest of Authorities. *Jesus Christ*, who perfected his Bodily Sacrifice at his Death, offer'd it up continually throughout the whole Course of his Life; he begun it in his Cradle, and he never wholly intermitted it, till he expir'd on the Cross; *he was a Man of Sufferings, and acquainted with Grief*, says the Prophet very emphatically; yet besides the Afflictions God was pleased to lay upon him, in the ungrateful and injurious Treatment he met with from the World, he chose such Circumstances in it as were afflicting of themselves, and Arguments of a continu'd Self-denial.

But because we are too tender and delicate of our selves to follow his Example, or to offer any Violence to our Bodily Appetites or Interests; God graciously applies proper Means to mortify us to them, by the more severe and afflicting Dispensations of his Providence.

4thly, If God means Afflictions to us for Good; under which I all along comprehend Disappointments: Then there is no forming any certain Judgment of the Wisdom or Folly, of the Vertuous or Vicious State of Men, from all that goes before them.

Not

Not of their Wisdom or Folly; because Time and Chance, which happen to all, are of so great Force in order to the Success of our Designs; that as the wisest Measures we can take many times contribute nothing to it; so the most weak and foolish are not always able to obstruct it.

I do not say, that the weak Reasons of a Man's Conduct never appear to us in his Disappointments for they often do; but we must see at the same time, very particularly, what Way he took, what Circumstances he was in, and upon what Motives he acted. Without the Knowledge of these things, 'tis impossible to judge certainly concerning any Person from the Event, whether he has govern'd himself by the Maxims of Prudence or not: For it sometimes happens, that a Man is *oblig'd* in Reason and Justice to do those things, which appear to others the most unreasonable; he must however act irrationally on a Thousand Occasions, who has a greater Regard to the Opinion of other Men, than to the satisfying his own Mind.

We shall still be less able to judge, from what befals Men in this World, concerning their Virtues or Impieties. If there be any true Judgment to be made of Men, with respect to their Spiritual Condition, from their Circumstances of Life, we ought rather to judge in Favour of the Afflicted and Unhappy: For there are several things spoken very much to their Advantage in Scripture. *Solomon* addresses himself to the Afflicted, as having a peculiar Interest in the Paternal Care and Favour of God; *My Son, despise not the chastning of the Lord, neither be weary of his Correction; for whom the Lord loveth he correcteth, even as a Father the Son in whom he delighteth*, Prov. 3: 11. St. *Paul* cites this Passage in his Epistle to the *Hebrews*, and very significantly stiles it an *Exhortation, which speaketh unto them, as unto Children.* And the

the Reaſon, whereby he proves it an Argument of God's Love, and of our Spiritual Adoption, is, That *he* chaſtens us *for our Profit*, to the End *we may be Partakers of his Holineſs*, Heb. 12. 5——10. St. *James*, in his General Epiſtle to encourage Chriſtians to bear their Sufferings paitently, refers them *to the Prophets who have ſpoken in the Name of the Lord, for an Example of ſuffering Affliction, and of Patience. Behold*, ſays he, in the next Words, he ſpeaks it as a known and commonly receiv'd Maxim, *we count them happy which endure*; 'twere endleſs to cite all the Paſſages and Examples of Scripture to this Purpoſe.

Shall we ſay then, that 'tis unhappy for Men not to be in one kind or other under unhappy Circumſtances? Or that they have great Reaſon to queſtion, whether God loves them, becauſe they are not viſited by him with any ſenſible Affliction? We do not abſolutely ſay ſo. There is a wide Difference betwixt the State of Chriſtians at preſent, and in the Infancy of the Church: 'Twas then a ſtanding Rule, That whoever would live godly in *Chriſt Jeſus*, ſhould ſuffer Perſecution; but ſince Chriſtianity is become the Religion of Nations, and incorporated into our Laws and Liberties, we are not ſo ordinarily expos'd, tho' ſometimes we are, to Difficulties and Perils in the Diſcharge of our Chriſtian Duty. There are therefore a great many Paſſages in the New Teſtament relating to this, and indeed to many other Particulars, which are not to be promiſcuouſly apply'd to all Chriſtians in all ſucceeding Ages; and the Miſapplication whereof, ſometimes occaſions great Errors and Scruples in the Minds of Men.

Yet ſo far our Sufferings are ſtill an Argument of God's Paternal Love to us, as they tend to make us more Obedient to him: And ſo far, no doubt,

is

is Prosperity it self. But it being known only to God which of these Two States is really better for us, and more conducing to this End, we ought entirely to resign our selves to his Wisdom, and believe *that* the best which he chuses for us, and even to receive it with Thankfulness: For what the Apostle particularly advises, with respect to an opulent or indigent Condition, is in the Reason of it applicable to every other State and Condition of Life. *Let the Brother of Low Degree rejoice in that he is exalted, but the Rich in that he is made low*, James 1. 9, 10.

These are the Inferences which, I take it, naturally arise from the Method of God's dealing in so severe a Manner, as they are apt to think it, with those that love him: And I hope what has been said may be of some Use to teach us, what I chiefly proposed to recommend to you, an entire Submission to the Will of God under the greatest Afflictions he is pleased to lay upon us. I know but one ill Use that can possibly be made of the Argument I have insisted so particularly upon; and shall beg leave, in a word or two more, to obviate it.

As there is nothing more ingenious than a sordid and covetous Temper, in excusing what it has no mind to: It may perhaps be said, that if Afflictions be both in their natural Tendence for our Good, and design'd by God to this End, then by contributing to relieve People in an afflicted State, we seem at once to do them a very great Injury, and to oppose the Designs of God.

To which I answer, in the first Place, That if there be any thing in this Objection, it proves too much; and contrary to what is acknowledg'd by those very Persons who make it. It follows from this way of arguing, that we ought not on *any* Occasion

casion to relieve Persons in Distress; in particular, that 'tis unlawful for us to administer Physick to the Sick, or to procure the Ease of our Friends in Pain, because the inflicting of Sickness and Pain being consider'd as the *Act* of God, and tending to the Exercise of their Patience and other Vertues; to attempt the Cure of their Sickness, or the Removal of their Pain, is in effect, as the Objection supposes, to act contrary to both the Will of God and their own Good. Yet no Man thinks this a sufficient Reason, why he should let his Friends or neareſt Relations lie under such Circumstances, without making them any manner of help.

It may be said, this is only an Argument *ad Hominem*; but does not seem to clear the Difficulty proposed, or to satisfy us how it comes to pass, that the Commands of God appear so repugnant to the Designs of his Providence. It is his Will, his efficacious Will, that good Men should be afflicted; and yet 'tis his Command, That we should do what we are able, to comfort and support them under their Afflictions.

'Tis sufficient to say in general, That the Commands of God are the Rule of our Obedience; and that pretended Difficulties (were there really any in what is here objected) are not to be admitted against plain and indispensible Duties. But we are able,

2. To give a more particular and distinct Answer to what is proposed; by saying, That as God sends Afflictions on Men, so he wisely proportions the Measure and Degree, and Continuance of them to the End for which they are sent: And therefore having commanded us to communicate to the Necessities of other Men, we are piously to presume, that in Proportion as we contribute to alleviate or remove

their Sufferings, 'tis his good Pleasure that they *should be* alleviated or remov'd.

This Consideration, which has occasionally offer'd it self, is not without its proper Use; but further discovers to us God's tender Care and Concern for those he is pleased to afflict; seeing he has laid so many powerful Engagements on all Christians, and made it indeed one Principal Test of their Christianity, to shew Mercy and Compassion to the Afflicted, according to those Words of St. *James*, wherewith I shall conclude, *Chap.* 1. 27.

Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, to visit the Fatherless and Widows in their Affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the World. Amen.

SER-

SERMON XI.

The true Notion of Predeſtination ſtated.

ROM. VIII. 29, 30.

For whom he did foreknow, he alſo did predeſtinate to be conform'd to the Image of his Son, that he might be the firſt-born among many Brethren.

Moreover whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo call'd; and whom he call'd, them he alſo juſtify'd; and whom he juſtify'd, them he alſo glorify'd.

WE have, ſay the *Calviniſts*, in theſe Words the golden Chain of Predeſtination; that is, in their Senſe of Predeſtination, the Eternal and *Irreſpective* Decrees of God to ſave a certain and ſelect Number of Perſons, without any previous Regard to their doing Good or Evil.

We ſay on the other Hand, That the Predeſtination of good Men to eternal Life, is upon Foreſight of what they will do; and that according to *Origen*, and all the Fathers before St. *Auſtin*, the Decrees of God, concerning the Salvation of Men, are not *irreſpective* or abſolute, but conditional; and preſuppoſed Faith and Repentance in ſuch as ſhall be ſaved. And St. *Auſtin* himſelf, before he was engag'd in the

Heat of Diſpute with *Pelagius*, and the Deſire of Victory inclin'd him to take up with other Principles, appears to have been of the ſame Opinion.

This being the State of the Controverſy, ariſing from theſe Words, I ſhall diſcourſe of them in the following Order.

Firſt, I ſhall ſhew in what Senſe they may be properly explain'd, and moſt agreeably to the Deſign of the Apoſtle.

Secondly, I ſhall ſhew that the Senſe, which the *Calviniſts* put upon them, is neither proper nor agreeable to the Apoſtle's Deſign, nor reaſonable in it ſelf.

Thirdly, I ſhall conclude with ſome uſeful Improvements from what has been ſaid.

Firſt, I am to ſhew, in what Senſe theſe Words may be properly explain'd, and moſt agreeably to the Deſign of the Apoſtle.

That I call a proper Explication, which ariſes from the natural Senſe and Order of the Words, without putting any Force upon them. And thus I take it, the following Paraphraſe of the Text will riſe.

For whom he did foreknow; thoſe, whom God from all Eternity foreſaw would be in time obedient to his heavenly Call (for they only are the Perſons deſcrib'd in the former Verſe, who love him, and *are call'd according to his Purpoſe*) *Them he alſo prædeſtinated*; he determin'd, upon his Foreſight of their Obedience, *to be conform'd to the Image of his Son*; or that they ſhould be like Jeſus Chriſt in a State of Suffering; to which God was pleaſed to appoint him, *that he might be the Firſt-born among many Brethren:* Or that by his *firſt* Suffering, *he might leave them an Example, that they ſhould follow his Steps*, 1 Pet. 2. 21. In which Place, 'tis obſervable that the Apoſtle, in a ſtrict Senſe, makes a State of Suffering one ſpecial Evidence of our Chriſtian

ſtian *Vocation*. Or our Saviour might be ſtil'd the *Firſt-born among his Brethren*, from the Merit and Dignity of his Sufferings, as the Apoſtle excellently argues; *For it became him, from whom are all Things, and by whom are all Things, in bringing many Sons unto Glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through Sufferings. For both he that ſanctifieth, and they who are ſanctified, are all one; for which Cauſe he is not aſham'd to call them* Brethren, *Heb.* 2. 10, 11.

Moreover, whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo call'd. Thoſe whom he thus deſign'd to follow the Example of Chriſt, he *actually* call'd to profeſs the Doctrine of the Croſs, and in Conſequence thereof, to a State of Suffering. *And whom he call'd, them he alſo juſtified:* Their Faith which ſupported them with ſo much Conſtancy and Reſolution under their Sufferings, was like that of *Abraham*'s, reckon'd unto them for Righteouſneſs; or ſuch at leaſt as God highly approv'd: For ſo to juſtify in Scripture ſometimes ſignifies no more than to expreſs our Favour, or good Liking of any thing. 'Tis us'd in this Senſe by *Job* to his Friends, *Chap.* 27. 5. *God forbid that I ſhould juſtify you.* By *Solomon*, Prov. 17. 15. *He that juſtifieth the Wicked, and he that condemneth the juſt, even they both are Abomination to the Lord.* And by our Saviour himſelf, *Mat.* 12. 47. *By thy Words thou ſhalt be juſtify'd, and by thy Words thou ſhalt be condemn'd.* To be juſtified can here import no more than to be approv'd or applauded, in the Opinion of thoſe very Perſons, whoſe Principles I am oppoſing. *And whom he juſtified, them he alſo glorify'd*, or will glorify; for an Enallage of Time, whereby that which is future is ſpoken of as already effected, will here be admitted on both Sides.

I know there has been another Senſe put upon theſe Words; *Them he alſo glorified*; as if they were to be underſtood ſtrictly with Reſpect to the Time paſt: And a Learned Divine, who has lately writ a very uſeful Diſcourſe on the *Five Articles*, ſeems to

prefer this way of interpreting them. He ſuppoſes God might properly be ſaid to have glorify'd thoſe, whom he enabled by his Spirit to work the greateſt Miracles; he ſupports this Interpretation by a great many appoſite Texts of Scripture; particularly by what Chriſt ſays to his Father concerning the Apoſtles, who were endow'd with this Power, *I have given them* the Glory, *which thou gaveſt me*, John 17. 22.

Yet tho' the Words conſider'd in themſelves might very well bear this Senſe, there lies a material Objection againſt admitting of it here; for they are deſign'd as an Argument to ſupport Chriſtians *in general*, under their Sufferings and Perſecutions. Except therefore all thoſe who ſuffer'd for the Faith of *Chriſt*, had this *glorious* Power of working Miracles; which will not, I ſuppoſe be pretended; then there will be no due Order or Connection of the Words of the Text. The former Part of it will relate univerſally to perſecuted Chriſtians; the latter Part, without any viſible Reaſon for ſuch a Diſcrimination, only to a particular and ſelect Number of them: Which would render the Apoſtle's Argument in the laſt, and moſt important Branch of it, concerning a State of Glory, of no Force to the greateſt Number of Chriſtians, who were under Perſecution then; nor to *any* Chriſtian, that we know of, in the World at this time.

And yet it is acknowledg'd, *That the whole Purpoſe of this Chapter is comfort Chriſtians*, (Chriſtians I take it in general, and not thoſe of them only who wrought Miracles) *againſt the Sufferings they were expoſed to in this World*. Which that Learned Author, to whoſe Labours the Publick is ſo much indebted, obſerves very juſtly from ſeveral Paſſages in this Chapter; and which indeed is ſufficiently obvious to any one, that impartially conſiders the main and general Scope of it. *Whitby*'s *Diſcourſe*, &c. *P.* 65.

Let

Let us now put the ſeveral Parts of this Explication of my Text, as it has Relation to the Context, together; and let us ſuppoſe the Apoſtle addreſſing himſelf to the *Romans* in theſe or the like Words:

" 'Tis the Will of God, that thoſe who love him, " and are obedient to his heavenly *Call*, ſhould un- " dergo many Afflictions and Perſecutions in this " World; for whom he *foreknew* thus qualify'd for a " State of Suffering, he wiſely made Choice of, as " the fitteſt Perſons to follow the Example of Jeſus " Chriſt; who was made perfect *through* Suffering: " To this End, he actually, and in his due time, call'd " them to ſuffer; and they behaving themſelves un- " der their Sufferings as became them, he was pleas'd " to look upon them as *righteous* Perſons, or at leaſt " highly to *approve* the Labours of their Love, and " will one Day crown their Patience and Fidelity " with *Glory* unſpeakable.

As this Interpretation, it muſt be confeſs'd, is plainly agreeable to the Apoſtle's principal Deſign in theſe Words; ſo it ſeems to ariſe very naturally, and without any violent or forc'd Conſtruction, out of them.

I proceed to ſhew, in the next Place,

Secondly, That the other Interpretation, in Favour of God's abſolute and irreſpective Decrees, is neither proper nor agreeable to the Apoſtle's Deſign; nor reaſonable in it ſelf.

1*ſt*, It is not proper or natural; becauſe it ſuppoſes that God Almighty has eternally decreed a certain and ſelect Number of Perſons to Salvation, without any Conſideration of what they would do; or of the good or ill Uſe they might make of their Liberty; whereas the very Order of the Words ſuppoſes the contrary; That God's predeſtinating Men to be ſav'd, is founded in his Foreknowledge of their complying

with the Means of Salvation. *For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate.*

We conclude therefore from the Words, That the Foreknowledge of God, concerning our Faith and Obedience, whereby we may be qualified for Heaven and Happiness, is prior to his predestinating of us to Life. The *Calvinists*, on the other Hand will have it, That God predestinates Men to Life, before he knows or enquires how they will behave themselves: And that he first decrees them worthy to enter into Life, and then resolves upon the Means how to *make* them so.

Whether of these Interpretations be more reasonable in it self, will appear afterwards. What I am to observe at present is, that the latter of them, according to the natural Order of the Words, is not only improper, but *preposterous*.

2. Neither if this Sense of the Words could be admitted, is it agreeable to the Design or Scope of the Apostle in them; which, as we have observ'd, is to comfort and support Christians in general, under their Sufferings. But admitting the *Calvinistical* Hypothesis to be true, that there are few in comparison of those who profess Christianity, that are predestinated to Life, the Argument of St. *Paul* in these Words to the *Romans*, in order to inspire them with Constancy and Resolution under their Sufferings, would run to this Effect:

" Those whom God *foreknew*, according to his " eternal Decrees, to be the chosen Vessels of his " Mercy, he thinks fit to exercise with many grie- " vous Troubles and Afflictions in this Life: But this " Consideration is sufficient to make you more than " Conquorors, and raise you above the greatest of " them, that they will terminate at last in your *Justi-* " *fication*, and a glorious Immortality. But to pre- " vent your being deceiv'd, I must tell you withal, " that 'tis but here and there one of you, suffer what

" you

" you will, or do what you can, that has any Inte-
" reſt in *theſe Decrees:* As to the reſt of you, you
" muſt bear the Sufferings God is pleaſed to lay on
" you, as well as you can. You are in *another* Decree,
" or to ſpeak more ſoftly, tho' it comes all to one
" thing, perhaps in *no* Decree, but a perfect State of
" Preterition: What I have therefore ſaid, does not
" appertain to ſuch Perſons; they are equally exclu-
" ded *the Means of Grace, and the Hope of Glory.*

This way of arguing, 'tis granted, might have had ſome Encouragement in it to thoſe, who were of a Sanguine Temper, and could more eaſily perſuade themſelves of their Intereſt in the eternal Favour of God; yet for others who were more modeſt and diffident of their ſpiritual State, ſuch a Declaration, inſtead of adminiſtring Comfort to them, would tend rather to fill their Minds with anxious and deſponding Thoughts; leſt by profeſſing Chriſtianity they ſhould render themſelves of all Men *moſt miſerable in this Life*, and ſtill be no nearer the Happineſs of the next.

To this it can be only reply'd, That all Men, whatever the ſecret Decrees of God may be towards them in particular, ought notwithſtanding to believe, that they have an Intereſt in the general Promiſes held forth to them in his revealed Will. But inſtead of anſwering one Difficulty, this confounds us with another; it ſuppoſes, That a Man may be under an Obligation to believe a *Lie*; nay, that God himſelf, *the God of Truth*, has *oblig'd* the Generality of Chriſtians to make wrong Judgments. But,

3*dly*, The Doctrine of God's abſolute and irreſpective Decrees is not reaſonable in it ſelf. And,

1. Becauſe 'tis inconſiſtent with the *Wiſdom* of God. It repreſents him as predeſtinating Men, without any Conſideration of their Faith and Obedience, to eternal Life; and then making Faith and Obedi-

ence

ence the Conditions of attaining it; and without which, notwithstanding his Decree, it cannot possibly be attain'd. As if you were to settle an Estate by an absolute *irrevocable* Deed of Gift on any Person, and afterwards declare to him, That tho' you have so settled it, yet except he behave himself very well, he must never expect to be the better for it.

But God does not only tell Men, That except they believe and repent, they shall certainly perish, whatever Decrees he has made in their Favour; but he exhorts, he invites, he persuades them to lay hold on eternal Life. He is passionately concern'd, lest they should neglect so great Salvation. But to what wise or reasonable End? If he knows it impossible for them after all to miscarry, and especially, if by any proper Evidences of their Conversion, they have arriv'd to know as much themselves.

Let us suppose any Person who has the Reputation of Wisdom, acting in a like manner, with Respect to his Child, his Friend, or his Servant; and let us see how such a Conduct will answer his Character; or whether, in case any of them were ill inclin'd, it might be a probable Method of securing their Fidelity and Observance. And therefore we say,

2. That this Doctrine which supposes God predestinating Men absolutely to Life, and then setting before them Life and Death, and putting it to their own Choice, whether they will prefer; besides, that it bears hard on the Wisdom of God, and looks like Collusion, it tends to make Men careless and remiss in their Duty. For the great Spring of Industry is the Prospect of some Advantage; but where Men are assur'd before-hand, that the Advantage they propose to themselves, is either infallibly secur'd to them; or after all their Endeavours impossible to be attain'd, they will be apt to grow very cold and remiss in what they do towards the attaining of it.

I know

I know some Solutions, such as they are, have been offer'd to this; but I dare appeal to the Judgment of the very Persons, by whom they are offer'd, whether it be not natural for those, who believe the Doctrine of God's absolute Decrees, to argue after this manner: If I am in the Decree of Election, I shall certainly be saved; and therefore tho' I gratify some present criminal Inclination, or defer my Repentance a while longer, yet this need not give me any great Pain; so long as all's safe at the Bottom, and I am *assur'd* of becoming a Penitent one time or other, and getting to Heaven at last. But,

1. 'Tis said, that where God determines the End, he always directs the Means, and that by an efficacious Will. But this, we say again, leaves the Objection just where it was. For if the Means God proposes in order to the End he designs, operate *infallibly*, they cannot be frustrated, whether we endeavour to co-operate with them or not; but if they do not operate infallibly, the Doctrine of absolute Predestination can be no longer tenable; for there can be no certain and absolute Decree of an uncertain Event.

2. 'Tis said further, That when Men apprehend themselves to be the chosen Vessels of God's Grace and Mercy, a mere Sense of Gratitude will secure their Obedience. And we grant, This is a very honourable, and to ingenuous Minds, a very powerful Motive to Religion: Yet the Wisdom of God has not thought it sufficient of it self to engage us to our Duty; and therefore we are exhorted to be zealous and diligent in our Christian Calling, both from the Hope of Reward, and the Fear of Punishment. We desire, says the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, Chap. 6. 11, 12. *That every one of you do shew the same Diligence, to the full Assurance of Hope unto the End, that ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through Faith and Patience inherit the*

the Promises: And therefore he professes concerning himself, *Phil.* 2. 16. he *had not run in vain, neither laboured in vain, in Hopes* that he might rejoice in the Day of Christ. He assigns it in another Place as the Reason, but it could have been no just Reason, if he was already infallibly secur'd of his Salvation, that he kept his Body in Subjection, lest that by any means when he had preach'd to others, he himself should *be a cast-away*, 1 Cor. 9. 27. We must either here suppose the Apostle reasoning and acting upon an *impossible* Supposition; or conclude, that he was a Stranger to the Doctrine of God's absolute and eternal Decrees. But what I cited all these Passages for, is to shew, That the principal Motives to a vigorous Obedience, in Scripture are taken from the Sanction of future Rewards and Punishments; and that could Men once persuade themselves that their Condition, as to these two different States, has been from Eternity absolutely fix'd and determin'd, the Force of these Motives would be very much lessen'd and impair'd.

3. 'Tis said, That all wise Persons will, tho' they are assur'd God's Decree of saving his Elect cannot be frustrated, yet for their own Comfort and Satisfaction endeavour to evidence their particular Calling and Election, by a faithful Discharge of their Duty: And we grant it very reasonable, that Men should endeavour to satisfy themselves concerning their eternal Condition, what side of the Question soever they take; but we say, that Men, under the Power of any Vicious Inclination or Habit, do not always consult the Peace of their own Minds, as *they are sensible* they ought to do; and that those who believe their Condition is already fix'd by an eternal and unalterable Decree of God, will of the two be the less concern'd to evidence their Hopes of Heaven by a Holy Life; than those who believe, that the Promises of God concerning a future State of Glory are con-

conditional; and that they have nothing to depend upon but their own Endeavours, in Concurrence with the Grace of God, to work out their own Salvation.

For in the former Case, if Men be tempted to commit, or are conscious of any notorious Crime, they may comfort themselves at least with these or the like Considerations, which flow naturally from their Principles; *That* God sees no Iniquity or *Perverseness* in his Chosen; *That* in them the greatest Sins do not destroy a State of Grace; or perhaps, *That* their Day of Grace is not yet come, but that when it does come, as it certainly will, if they be in the Decree of Election, it will bring them to Repentance; and all the happy Consequences of their Repentance, the *Pardon* of their Sins, their *Sanctification*, and the *Salvation* of their Souls will unavoidably follow.

But in the latter Case, where our Title to Heaven is suspended upon our living in a sinful or impenitent State, tho' a Man may possibly indeed deceive himself, and Sin on with the Hopes of an after-Repentance; yet he cannot flatter himself, upon any possible Supposition, with an *absolute* Assurance of it.

As they are therefore the dangerous Shifts and Evasions, whereby Sinners impose upon themselves in this Article of delaying their Repentance, which betray them into most or all the Sins they are guilty of; the more, we say, any Doctrine encourages such Delays, the more it favours Vice and Corruption. Now whether of these Doctrines tend more to the Encouragement of procrastinating Sinners, is, I think, sufficiently plain from the Reason I have mention'd, as well as from many others; which 'tis not further necessary for me to mention.

3. This Doctrine of absolute Predestination is contrary to the natural and proper Notion we have of a Reward;

Reward; which always presupposes something to be done, in Consideration of which it is promised: Accordingly the Scriptures represent our future Happiness in several Places, and in direct Terms, as the *Reward* of our present Obedience, *Heb.* 10. 35. 11. 26. *Rev.* 22. 12. But with what Propriety can that be call'd a Reward of our Obedience, which God has absolutely determin'd for us, without any manner of Regard to our Obedience; or so much as considering (for so this Doctrine supposes) whether we would obey him, or not?

Would you call the absolute Promise of a Favour, which from a pure Motive of Generosity, you make to any Person whom you never saw or heard of before, and who never was in any way of serving you, the Reward of his former Services to you? Such a Promise may indeed be a means of engaging him more faithfully in your Interests for the future; but to tell him you make it freely, and upon no such View, and yet that he must either serve you in such a Manner, or expect no Benefit of it, because he is not to consider it as a free Gift, but a Reward, is in my Apprehension to talk altogether unintelligibly.

Either therefore we must say, that the Rewards of Heaven are promis'd and assur'd to us conditionally, and then the Doctrine of God's absolute Decrees is given up; or else we must say, that the Scriptures, in calling them Rewards, speak contrary to the common Sense and Notions of Mankind; and then indeed, there can be so far no arguing from them, either for or against such Decrees.

But the Nature of a Reward, according to our Notion of it, does not only require something to be done, but to be done freely, and without Constraint; for nothing, properly speaking, but free Agents, are capable of being rewarded; there cannot, I conceive, be a more evident Truth. Let us examine a little the Doctrine of absolute Predestination by it.

God

God then is repreſented by an irreverſible Decree, determining free Agents, who may make a good, or ill Uſe of their Liberty to a State of Happineſs, as a Reward of their Obedience. This, we ſay, implies a direct Repugnancy, not to ſay Contradiction, in the Nature of the Thing; for here is a fix'd and *unfruſtrable* Reward ſecur'd to thoſe, who, after all, may or may not comply with the Means, which are neceſſary to qualify them for it; and which, at the ſame time, conſider'd as a Reward, *neceſſarily* infers ſuch a Liberty in them; or in other Words, what in the very Reaſon of the thing ſuppoſes the Freedom of our Choice, cannot, we think, be infallibly made over to us, till it be known how we will determine our Choice.

But we are told, that this is not Matter of a real but pretended Inconſiſtency; becauſe God will effectually and infallibly operate in us the Condition, if it may be call'd ſo, which is pre-requir'd to entitle us to the Promiſe.

Yet this again is anſwering an Objection in different Terms, with the very thing objected againſt; For that, we ſay, can no more properly be call'd a Reward, in order to which our Choice is over-rul'd in what we do, than that which is promiſed us without Conſideration of our doing any thing at all. Seeing if God operate in his Elect by a conſtraining invincible Grace, the Faith and good Works he rewards in them, are not properly, no nor in *any* Senſe upon the Principles of thoſe I am arguing againſt, to be aſcrib'd to the Elect, but wholly and abſolutely to God.

For ſo they repreſent us, as wholly paſſive in the ſeveral Inſtances of our Duty; and to magnify the Power of God's Grace, deſtroy the proper Uſe and Freedom of thoſe Faculties he has given us. Thus they infer from thoſe Metaphorical Expreſſions in Scripture, wherein our Converſion is repreſented by a *Re-*

a *Resurrection*, a *Creation*, a New *Birth*, a *putting off* the Old Man and *putting on* the New; that we can no more contribute to the good Works we do, than *Nothing* did towards the Creation of the World, or a dead Man can do towards his being raised to Life again.

My Business is not to shew, that notwithstanding these Figurative Allusions, which are ill apply'd, we are still at Liberty to comply with or resist the Motions of God's Grace: All I would observe at present is, that this Way of arguing, were it really just, necessarily supposing that we are wholly passive in all the Instances of our Obedience; except we are capable of being rewarded for *doing nothing*, there can be nothing promised us in the Gospel properly call'd a Reward.

The Sum of what I have said is, That if God have made any absolute Decrees concerning the Salvation of a particular Number of Persons, he has, by virtue thereof, oblig'd himself to execute the Orders of his Will, contrary to the Original Order and Frame of *Human Nature*, which he has made free; and to the very Nature of Rewards, as well as Punishments, which supposes it free: Not to add, that the tender Expostulations of God in Scripture with Sinners, can have no intelligible Account given of them, if a Freedom of Will in Man to chuse the Evil, and refuse the Good, be not admitted.

What I here assert concerning the Nature and Reasons of Rewards in general, is exactly agreeable to the Sentiments of *Gregory Nyssen* in his greater Catechism; in Answer to the Objection, why does not God give Repentance to all Men, seeing nothing can resist his Will? He says, that God may indeed forcibly over-rule or compel inanimate insensible Creatures, to serve the Designs of his Providence. But were rational Creatures, who are endued with a Liberty of Choice, not to follow the Motions of their own

own Will, but to be wholly determin'd in what they do, by an over-powering Grace; this would deſtroy their Liberty, and by Conſequence the Praiſe or *Reward* of what they do well.

We are therefore to underſtand this Father, as ſpeaking of rational Creatures in a State of Trial and Probation; for we do not ſuppoſe 'tis abſolutely *eſſential* to Man, but only in his preſent Condition, that he ſhould have a Power of chuſing Good or Evil indifferently. God himſelf has not this wretched *Liberty*; the Holy Angels, and the Spirits of juſt Men made perfect, we piouſly preſume, have it not; but the Reaſon, we ſay, is, becauſe they are no longer in a State of Trial, they have receiv'd their Reward, and are not now under Circumſtances of Temptation: There is no arguing then from their Caſe, to that of Men, who are yet to give *Proof* of their Obedience, and work out their own Salvation, and have no further Title to it, than they acquit themſelves faithfully, and come off with Victory, in the ſeveral Trials and Temptations they are expos'd to.

We muſt ſay therefore, either that Man is not at preſent in a State of Trial; or if he be, we muſt neceſſarily ſuppoſe him capable of performing or neglecting his Duty: For there cannot be a greater Inconſiſtency, or any thing we are leſs capable to apprehend, than that God ſhould make *Trial* of the Obedience of thoſe Men, whom his Grace conſtrains *to* Obedience, by a Power, which 'tis impoſſible for them to reſiſt.

Thoſe on the other ſide are ſo ſenſible of this, that in effect they deny Man is here in a State of Probation; and tell us, that the Commands of God in Scripture to his Elect, are only to be conſider'd as ſo many Promiſes to them, whereby he engages himſelf to perform what he commands for them: So that when he ſays, *Do this and thou ſhalt live*, the Meaning is, thou ſhalt live whether thou wilt do it or not;

for what I command thee, is not to make Trial of thy Choice, but only to shew the Power of my Grace in over-ruling it. If such a Latitude as this, in interpreting Scripture, may be admitted, and there be no manner of Difference between a Command and a Promise; there is an End of our reasoning, if we would reason from common Notions, upon the Sense of Divine Revelation.

I have endeavour'd, upon all these Considerations, to shew that this Doctrine of absolute Predestination to Life is without any good or reasonable Grounds: But I shall now proceed to shew,

4*thly*, That as it is commonly explain'd, 'tis not only unreasonable, but altogether intolerable. I mean, as it is explain'd to have an immediate and necessary Connection with the Doctrine of absolute Reprobation: For if God have, by a fix'd and unchangeable Decree, predestinated a certain determinate Number of Persons to Life, then 'tis concluded, that all those who are not in that Decree, must necessarily fall short of Life: And there being no middle State between Heaven and Hell, must for the same Reason unavoidably and of Course be damn'd. This, I say, is what I am going to consider as a commonly receiv'd, tho' I grant it, as I shall have Occasion to observe afterwards, not to be a necessary Consequence: And indeed, were it not for the Dependency, one of these Doctrines is supposed to have upon the other, that of absolute Predestination to Life might be much better tolerated; for how contrary soever it may appear to the Wisdom of God, the Design of the Gospel in laying the most powerful Obligations upon Men to Obedience, and to the Sanction of Rewards, or the Nature of a probationary State; Yet God's Goodness and Justice seem still to be safe, and in great Measure his Holiness; nay, his preventing Men from falling into Sin by an irresisti-

ble

ble Power of his Grace, appears so far rather to magnify, and do Honour to this Attribute. Neither can it be contrary to his *Goodness* to design Men to an eternal State of Happiness, and to prepare them by proper Methods for it; nor to his *Justice* to make them happy, whether they will comply with the Terms of Salvation or not; because they are such, as he had an unquestionable Right to command.

But this Doctrine on the left Hand, which falls under our present Consideration, besides that most, or all the Reasons I have already mention'd, indifferently hold good against it, is directly contrary to all these Attributes of God's Holiness, Goodness and Justice.

With respect to the *Supralapsarians*, there needs nothing more to be done, in order to evince this, than to set their Principles before you in a true Light.

They argue then, that the Glory of God being the ultimate End of all his Actions, and he considering it would conduce very much to his Glory, that his Justice should display it self in the Destruction of Sinners, design'd before he created Mankind, that a certain Number, the far greater Number of them, should be condemn'd for their Sins to a State of Eternal Misery and Torment. This absolute Decree being pass'd, the next Thing to be consider'd, was the Means whereby it might be effected: And to the End it should not be frustrated, *Adam*, who should sustain the Person of all Mankind, was to be created, and a Law given him; which by an ill Use of his Liberty he should be effectually permitted, or rather according to this Doctrine determin'd, to transgress: And all his Posterity being involv'd in the Guilt of his Transgression, a Way was made for the sure Execution of God's Design, in making his avenging Justice triumph eternally over them; some few of them excepted, whom for the Glory of his Mercy, he was

pleas'd to reſque out of this dreadful and miſerable Condition.

Upon this Scheme, God is repreſented as decreeing Men to ſuffer endleſs and unſpeakable Torments, before they were created; and, as it were, laying a form'd Deſign, in order to circumvent and enſnare them, that his Decree might *operate*, and *certainly* have its Effect.

I am ſenſible how difficult it is, to repreſent Doctrines which are ſo injurious to the Honour of God, in Terms worthy of him; or of that profound Reverence we owe to his Divine Majeſty. Yet ſuch Doctrines muſt either be faithfully repreſented, or in vain we endeavour to expoſe them; and there is no way of repreſenting them faithfully, but in ſuch Terms as thoſe that eſpouſe them muſt be ſuppos'd to uſe, were they to ſpeak out and diſcover their real Sentiments.

'Tis to be hoped therefore, a good and merciful God will pardon the Effects of a particular Zeal for his *Goodneſs* and *Mercy*, if the Manner wherein we are oblig'd to ſpeak of him in the preſent Argument (if we will ſpeak to it all) be not ſo Exact and Expreſſive of our awful Regard and Veneration *for* him, as might be wiſh'd. Yet leſt I ſhould exceed the Meaſures of them too far, I ſhall only add as to the *Supralapſarians*, that their Theory of God's Decree is equally repugnant *to the common Notions of Mankind*; for he muſt be of a ſtrange Make, who has not a more *grateful* Idea of Mercy than Juſtice, eſpecially of vindictive Juſtice: And *to the current Teſtimonies of Holy Writ*, wherein God Almighty delights to exalt his Attributes of Mercy and Goodneſs, wherein he declares himſelf *abundant* in them, *Exod.* 34. 6. and calls avenging Juſtice his *ſtrange Work*, Iſa. 28. 21. So that had there really been a Competition between Mercy and Juſtice, in drawing up his ſuppos'd Decrees, we have great Reaſon to conclude, that an equal

equal Number, at leaſt, if not a vaſt Majority of Mankind, would have been brought over to the Side of Mercy.

The *Sublapſarians* looking upon this Doctrine as a little too harſh, which repreſents God as creating Man with a form'd Deſign of making him fall a Sacrifice to his Juſtice, have endeavour'd to ſoften it, by ſuppoſing Man in his *laps'd State* the Object of God's abſolute Decrees; and upon this Scheme they think there can be no Imputation, either on his Holineſs, his Goodneſs, or his Juſtice. Not *on his Holineſs*, becauſe Man being now conſider'd as a Sinner, and fallen from a State of Grace, God is not oblig'd to reſtore him by an irreſiſtible Power *of* his Grace. Not *on his Goodneſs*, becauſe Acts of Mercy are free; and 'twas more than ſufficient, for the Vindication of this Attribute, that God out of his good Pleaſure ſav'd ſo many out of the corrupt Maſs. Nor laſtly, *to his Juſtice*; becauſe Sin may be juſtly puniſh'd.

This being the more plauſible Opinion of the two, tho' in Effect they come both to one thing; I ſhall, in Confutation of it, and in Anſwer to what is here ſaid, ſhew,

1. 'Tis contrary to the Holineſs of God. There is nothing in Scripture repreſented more odious to God than Sin, or to ſpeak ſtrictly, there is nothing but Sin really odious to him; yet according to the Doctrine of abſolute Reprobation, or if you pleaſe to call it by the more gentle Name of *Preterition*, the greateſt Part of Mankind are fallen into a State, not, as will appear afterwards, originally by their own Fault, wherein they are under a Neceſſity of Sinning; for God has decreed to deny them the neceſſary Aids of his Grace to reſtrain them from Sin; and without which they can do nothing but what is Evil and Offenſive to him. How can we reconcile this with the

Purity and Perfections of the Divine Nature; or with what God has declar'd of himself in his reveal'd Will, that he is a Lover of Righteousness, and a Hater of Iniquity; That the Sins of Men are an Abomination to him; That he abhors them; That he connot away with them; That he is not able to bear them? But especially how can we account for the Conduct of God towards Christians, whom he has by an express Law call'd *not to Uncleanness, but unto Holiness*; if after all, he has determin'd to leave the greater Number of them, without those Means of Grace, which are absolutely necessary to sanctify and make them *holy*; and who notwithstanding partake of those Ordinances, which are instituted as the Means of Holiness, and are oblig'd to communicate in them? May we not justly say, That such Institutions, if they be not intended for Persons worthy of them, as no Reprobate, to whom the Grace of God is not dispensed, can be, have instead of promoting Holiness, a direct and visible Tendence to encourage Profanation? Why then, for Instance, are Reprobates indifferently exhorted to hear the Word of God; to pray to him for his Grace; to prepare themselves for the Reception of the Holy Sacraments? But above all, why are Infants promiscuously admitted to the Sacrament of Baptism; since the Baptismal Efficacy cannot be imparted to such of them, as are in the Decree of Preterition; for they too, poor Innocents, are many of them supposed to be included in it? And yet this Supposition makes Baptism, which the Apostle stiles in general the *Lover of Regeneration*, not an Institution, with Respect to *them*, worthy of the Wisdom or Holiness of God, but only a more pompous and solemn Piece of Pageantry. And this probably may be one Reason, why the Anabaptists, who are generally *Calvinistical* in this Point, do not admit Infants to Baptism; and they are so far, I humbly conceive, not without Reason.

We

We grant what was said, That the Holiness of God does not require he should convert Sinners by an Irresistible Power of Grace, because the Action of God must always bear the Character of his Attributes; he has made Man free, and it does not become his Wisdom to destroy his own Work, which the Exercise of such a Power upon Man in this State of Trial would do. Now the Attributes of God do not interfere one with another; as all the Acts of his Holiness are wise, so all the Acts of his Wisdom are holy.

As for this Reason God does not convert Sinners by an irresistible Power of his Grace, we say such a Power is not necessary to their Conversion; 'tis sufficient for the Vindication of his Holiness, that he afford them such a Measure of his Grace, as may enable them, if they be not wanting to themselves, to perform'd the Duties requir'd of them: And without a competent Measure of it to this End, we cannot indeed comprehend how any thing can be Matter of strict Duty to them: For there does not seem to be a more clear and evident Truth in the World than this, That no Man is obliged to do what is absolutely impossible to be done.

2*dly*, This Doctrine of absolute Reprobation is no less repugnant to the Goodness of God. Goodness, according to our Idea of it, does not only import an *Inclination* to do good, but will on all proper Occasions exert it self in real *Acts* of Kindness and Beneficence. 'Tis in a manner agreeable to this Idea, the Scriptures speak of God, as that *He is good, and does good*; that *his Mercies are over all his Works*; that *the Earth is full of his Goodness*; and that *he would have all Men to be sav'd*.

Were we not to argue from that Goodness, which is essential to the Divine Nature; yet what Account can be given of these *express* Declarations concerning it? If after all, it had been *good* for the far greater

Part of Mankind, that they had never been born; not thro' any Fault of their own, but an utter Incapacity they were to be put, or suffer'd to continue under, of being sav'd. Such a Conduct, instead of declaring the Wonders, which the Goodness of God does for the Children of Men, would rather fill their Minds with anxious Thoughts of his Designs towards them, and render him a *perpetual* Object of Terror unto them.

As to what we were told, that *Acts of Mercy are free*, and therefore 'twas no Imputation on the Goodness of God, that he decreed to leave Sinners to themselves in a State of Sin, which would unavoidably end in their eternal Destruction: We grant the Truth of this so far, as to say, the Goodness of God does not strictly oblige him to rescue Sinners out of the State they have *brought themselves* into by Sin, and especially by sinful Habits, where a competent Measure of Grace has been given them to restrain them from sinning. But this is not the Case of Reprobates, who, as we are told, are left to follow the Motions of natural Concupiscence without any such Restraint, and to whom God has decreed never to grant it. So that they are under an unavoidable Necessity of being lost and undone for ever. And upon the whole Matter there seems to be very little Difference, between a positive Decree, that a Man should be damn'd, and a negative One which debars him those Assistances, whereby alone he can escape Damnation. If Reprobates are in Consequence of God's Decrees necessarily to suffer eternal Torments, 'tis much the same thing whether his Decrees take Effect against them directly or *indirectly*.

But this Doctrine more particularly affects the Goodness of God, with respect to Christians, as he so frequently, and with much Compassion, exhorts and invites them to Repentance; as he so tenderly expostulates with them, *Why they will not come unto him, that*

that they may have Life: And declares, he *is not willing that* any *ſhould periſh, but that* all *ſhould come to Repentance*, 2 Pet. 3. 9.

God by all theſe Methods not only publiſhes a general Act of Grace, as I may ſay, and without Exception, to Chriſtians, but he invites them in the moſt engaging Manner to lay hold on the Benefits of it. And thereby in effect declares, ſo far as Words can declare, That no Man ſhall be damn'd for want of the neceſſary Means to ſave him. For to apply himſelf in ſo tender and affectionate a Manner to all Men, and yet only to intend the Benefit of ſome Few by his Applications, is to raiſe in Sinners *reaſonable* Expectations, without any Deſign of anſwering them; and ſo to enhance their Miſery by a Diſappointment of thoſe Hopes, which appear'd ſo well grounded.

The Diſtinction of a ſecret Will in God contradiſtinct to his reveal'd Will, is here of no Uſe; for tho' it ſhould be allow'd, againſt all Reaſon, to acquit his Veracity, yet what we obſerve concerning his Goodneſs will ſtill hold true; for how could we, upon any Account, think him worthy the Reputation of a good Man, who after all the repeated Expreſſions of his Favour to us, ſhould give us at laſt to underſtand, that he had no good Deſign in them towards us?

But in Truth this Diſtinction of a *ſecret Will* ſtrikes at the very Foundation of that Doctrine, which it is brought to ſupport. For if God may Will contrary to what he has plainly declar'd, admitting the Doctrine of abſolute Predeſtination were clearly reveal'd in Scripture, yet how could any Man be aſſur'd, that God deſign'd it to have any Effect? Nay, as to the darker ſide of it, which relates to Reprobates, there would be much greater Reaſon to believe God *ſecretly* deſign'd it to have no Effect, than there is to imagine, that the greateſt Part of Chriſtians have no Intereſt in the general Overtures of Grace, which are tender'd

der'd to them in the Gospel, and which they are importun'd to comply with.

In the former Case, should the Scriptures according to this Distinction deceive Men, their Error would do them no wrong; nay, 'twould be happy for them to be deceiv'd: But in the latter Case, the Wrong they suffer'd would be visibly heightned by their being deceiv'd. How far I have Reason for this Remark, appears not only from the Consideration of God's Goodness, but, in the next Place,

3. From his Justice. We have not, I take it, a clearer Notion of any thing, than that no Person ought to suffer for what he cannot help. Provided his Sufferings be not *medicinal*, or such as exceed the Benefits he receives from those, who have Authority to inflict them. This, with a little Improvement, will easily answer all the Arguments objected to us, from the Sufferings of young Children and Ideots.

But vindictive Justice, which falls at present under our Consideration, never punishes but with Regard to the Transgression of some Law, which it was in the Offender's Power to observe. Yet this Doctrine of Reprobation represents God as decreeing to punish Sinners eternally for their Disobedience to those Laws, which they were never in any Capacity of obeying. Such a Procedure being directly contrary to our common Notions of what is Just, and the Practice of all well regulated Courts of Justice in the World, we cannot suppose it consistent with the Justice of the most high God; all whose Ways are equal, and who appeals to us, that is, to our common Notions of Justice, for the Equality of them: And we have no other way of judging concerning them, but according to our common Notions.

When 'tis said therefore in Vindication of this Doctrine, that *Sin may be justly punish'd:* We do not deny the Assertion in general, because if it be understood

ſtood concerning thoſe Sins, which proceed from the Arbitrary Choice of Man, and which it was in his Power to avoid, nothing is more true. Yet when we ſpeak of thoſe Sins, if they may be properly call'd Sins, which Man was under a Neceſſity of committing, a Neceſſity he did not bring himſelf under, we think what is aſſerted, ſo plainly repugnant to the Juſtice of God, that it cannot poſſibly have any juſt or reaſonable Foundation.

And yet this, according to the Decretaliſts, is the miſerable Caſe of poor Reprobates; God requires of them impoſſible Conditions of Obedience, and then paſſes a Sentance of eternal Deſtruction upon them for not complying with thoſe Conditions. Is not this in other Words to ſay, That God expects to reap where he has not ſown? And will demand under the ſevereſt Penalties, an Account of thoſe *Talents* from Men, which they never receiv'd?

No, ſay thoſe we are arguing againſt, all Mankind had originally in the Perſon of *Adam* a Power of obeying *the Law*, the Breach whereof was juſtly threatned with the Loſs of that Power. But as *Adam* was their Repreſentative, his Diſobedience is charg'd upon them as their perſonal Act; and they are anſwerable for the Conſequences of it, an utter Inability to do any thing that is good or acceptable to God here, and eternal Death hereafter. So that they may properly be ſaid to have brought themſelves under the preſent Neceſſity that is objected, of their living and dying in a ſinful State.

All this is ſpoken precariouſly, and concludes nothing, except it could be prov'd, that all the Poſterity of *Adam*, formally or virtually at leaſt, conſented that they would ſtand by what he did, according to the Covenant he was entred into with God; one Part of which was, If he eat of the forbidden Fruit he ſhould forfeit for himſelf, and all his Deſcendants, that original Rectitude of his Nature, or State of Innocence,

nocence, wherein he was at first created. But as it cannot be prov'd that there was any such formal or expres's Covenant on the Part of *Adam*, so neither, if it could, is there any Reason, why all those that were to descend from him, but knew nothing of this Transaction, should be concluded by it. For it seems equally unjust to punish Men for what they cannot help, and for what is done by another Person without their Knowledge and Consent; and to which perhaps, in an Affair of such Consequence, they ought not to have given their Consent. Why then, will you say, did a just God punish the Sons of *Adam* for his Offence, with temporal Death? 'Tis answer'd, That if this might be call'd a Punishment, 'twas only in a strict Sense so to *Adam* himself; for he only that Sins can properly be said to be Punish'd. But we say further, That the Immortality of our Bodies, were Men really to have continu'd immortal in Case *Adam* had not sinn'd, being a free Gift of God, he might or might not dispense it to the Sons of Men, without doing them any Wrong, as he thought fit. Now 'tis plain, it can be no Imputation on the Justice of God to do that, after *Adam* had sinn'd, which he might justly have done, in Case *Adam* had never sinn'd. Whether therefore God should take Occasion from the Sin of *Adam* to inflict temporal Death on his Posterity, was rather a Consideration of Wisdom than Justice. 'Twas sufficient to the Vindication of this Attribute, That the Evils which the Sin of *Adam* occasionally brought on Mankind, should not exceed the Benefits of their Creation; and that, we affirm, they did not. But they push the Objection further; 'Tis visible, 'tis confess'd, that we derive from our first Parents a strong Propension at least to Sin. We do so; but we do not think such a Propension *strictly* a Sin, because 'tis involuntary, and what by all their Care and Caution the best of Men cannot wholly free themselves from. We may call it therefore our Unhap-

happineſs; but ſince God only puniſhes us for our voluntary and actual Sins, and for thoſe too after our frequent Provocations, by withdrawing the neceſſary Aids of his Grace from us, his Juſtice is not only acquitted, but his Mercy and Goodneſs highly magnify'd by ſuch a Conduct: Eſpecially ſince by a due Uſe of our Liberty in Concurrence with his Grace, he has notwithſtanding this natural *Propenſion*, put us in a Capacity of a greater Happineſs, than that to which we were originally created in a Terreſtrial Paradiſe.

There is but one Argument more of any Weight which is brought to acquit the Juſtice of God in his Decree of Reprobation, and that is founded on the Diſtinction of ſufficient Grace: 'Tis ſaid, That God might juſtly paſs an eternal Decree of Damnation to be executed in time, againſt Reprobates, becauſe he deſign'd at the ſame time to afford them a ſufficient Meaſure of his Grace, in the due Uſe of which they might perform the Conditions requir'd to their Salvation.

But this is a Diſtinction which 'tis impoſſible for us to comprehend the Reaſons of, from thoſe that urge it. For 'tis a plain Contradiction to ſay, That a Man is under an abſolute Sentence of Damnation; and yet that he has ſufficient Grace given him to avoid it. Becauſe what is ſufficient to any End, muſt have at leaſt a *poſſible* Tendence to produce it; from whence it will follow undeniably, That the irreſiſtible Decrees of God may after all *poſſibly* be revers'd. We think it not only poſſible, but indeed highly probable, that if God afford all Men ſufficient Means of his Grace, it will operate at leaſt effectually in ſome of them. For can that be called ſufficient, which in Millions of Inſtances never had any Effect, nor is ever like to the End of the World to have any? Should we call him a ſufficient Architect, who after a hundred Trials, never built one regular or tolerably compact Houſe,

House, and who we are assur'd, whatever he *possibly* may, yet never will build one? Much less Reason is there to imagine, that of so many Thousands and Thousands of Men, to whom God has afforded sufficient Means in order to their Salvation, not *one* of them shall finally be sav'd.

Others therefore being sensible of the Weakness of this Distinction, have contriv'd a New Scheme: They suppose that the Decrees of God, to save a certain and determinate Number of his Elect, are *absolute*; but that it does not necessarily follow, and so far they appear to be in the right, That therefore God had passed an absolute Decree of their Damnation, upon all others: For a Medium may be found between his electing some Persons certainly and infallibly to Salvation, and his absolutely excluding those, who are not so elected, from all Means and Capacity of being sav'd. They hold then, That some few Persons may, by a good Use of the common Grace, which is dispensed to them, get to Heaven at last; and that others, who neglect to improve under the same Means of Grace, can have no Reason to murmur against God, because their Damnation is of themselves, and therefore *Just*.

Now this Opinion seems pretty fairly to acquit, not only the Justice of God, but his Holiness and Goodness too; and where it not for other Reasons false, it appears to be of no very dangerous Consequence to Religion or Morality; but the Doctrine I have apply'd my self more particularly to consider, by giving us wrong Notions of the Moral Attributes of God, visibly undermines the Foundation of both. Nay, upon this Supposition, that the Doctrine of Reprobation is taught in the Scriptures, 'twill be impossible to convince an Unbeliever, that the Scriptures are Divinely reveal'd; for we can bring no Proof for the Divine Authority of them, more clear, than that a Doctrine which is inconsistent with the clearest Ideas

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we have of the Holineſs and Goodneſs, and Juſtice of God, *cannot* be true.

But has this Doctrine then no Foundation in Scripture? I anſwer: There are ſome Paſſages in Scripture, which at firſt View may ſeem to favour it, and have been too frequently interpreted in Favour of it. That I may therefore render a Diſcourſe, which was compos'd for private Satisfaction, of as general Uſe as I can; I ſhall take Two or Three of the moſt Popular and Remarkable of thoſe Paſſages into Conſideration,

The *Firſt* I ſhall briefly ſpeak to, is that of the next Chapter, *v.* 13. *Jacob have I loved, and Eſau have I hated.* God being repreſented, as ſpeaking theſe Words, before the Children were yet born, or had done Good or Evil, 'tis concluded from them, that he may by Right of his abſolute Sovereignty, determine as he pleaſes, and without rendring any other Reaſon for it, concerning the future Condition of Men, whether in a State of endleſs Miſery or Happineſs. But this is putting a very harſh Conſtruction upon the Words, which, of themſelves, they will not reaſonably bear: For God's Love to *Jacob*, and Hatred to *Eſau*, ought to be explain'd in a Senſe agreeable to the Words immediately foregoing, which are theſe; *the Elder ſhall ſerve the Younger.* So that 'twas only a *Temporal* Privilege, that God, in whom all Property is veſted, confer'd as a Teſtimony of his Love on *Jacob*, and depriv'd *Eſau* of, as having leſs Favour for him: For ſo *to hate*, muſt neceſſarily ſignify, in other Places of Scripture, only a lower Degree of Love. As when our Saviour makes it a Qualification of thoſe who would be his Diſciples, that they ſhould hate Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brethren and Siſters, *Luke* 14. 26. *John* 12. 25. his Meaning is no more, than that their Love to him ſhould be prefer'd to all Conſiderations whatever:

whatever; and so he explains himself, *Mat.* 10. 37. *He that loveth Father or Mother* more *than me, is not worthy of me*, &c.

Why then should these Words, which relate only to a Temporal Consideration, be extended to shew, That God may justly exercise an arbitrary Power in the eternal Destruction of his Creatures, without any regard to what they do? Is there no Difference between depriving a Man of what he has no absolute Right to, and without which his Life may be very happy and comfortable to him; and condemning him to a State of eternal Torments, where Life it self becomes in a true and proper Sense *hateful* to him? If we consider the History of *Esau*, tho' he was not perhaps one of the best, yet he does not appear, by any Means, to have been one of the worst of Men: Why then should he be singled out above all others, at every turn, to justify this Doctrine; and for no other Reason; as if he were certainly a Reprobate, and there were no room to entertain Charitable Thoughts of him?

Yet I own the Apostle had a further Design in these Words; and that they do not so much Personally concern *Jacob* and *Esau*, as their Posterity. God, out of his good Pleasure, determin'd to make *the Seed of Jacob his chosen*, and admit them into a special Covenant with him, exclusive of the Posterity of *Esau*: And this too, we think, he might justly do, because it being a free and arbitrary Act of Favour, there was no Obligation of Justice, why *Esau*'s Posterity should share in the Privileges of it.

That the Words are to be thus explain'd, appears from the Passage of *Malachi*, Chap. 1. 2. to which the Apostle here refers: For 'tis plain, the Prophet is there speaking of the Descendants of *Esau*, the *Edomites*, and of *Israel, in general*; not of the Person of *Esau*, or *Jacob* in particular. And this way of speaking is highly agreeable to the Words of God to *Rebecca*, part

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of which the Apostle here cites, *Gen.* 25. 23. *Two* Nations *are in thy Womb, and two manner of* People *shall be separated from thy Bowels; and the one People shall be stronger than the other, and the Elder shall serve the Younger.*

Now if these Words import any thing beyond the present Dispensations of God to the House of *Jacob* or *Esau*, in this Life, and may be stretch'd to signify God's Love or Hatred to them, with respect to their eternal Interests; it will follow, that all the Posterity of *Jacob* were to a Man elected to eternal Life; contrary to what will be admitted on the other side; contrary to one principle Argument of St. *Paul* in this Epistle, which is to shew the Blindness and Obstinacy of the *Jews*, in rejecting our Saviour and his Holy Religion; and lastly, contrary to the express Words of this Apostle at the Sixth Verse of this Chapter, *They are not all Israel, who are of Israel.* 'Twill likewise follow, that all the Line of *Esau* were Reprobates, contrary to what is very probably suppos'd, that *Job* and his Friends were of that Line; contrary however, to what in all Reason and Charity, in regard to so many Thousands of Souls, *ought* to be suppos'd.

But what shall we reply then to those Words of the next Chapter? *v.* 20. *Shall the thing form'd say to him that form'd it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the Potter Power over the Clay of the same Lump, to make one Vessel unto Honour, and another to Dishonour?* Do not these Words plainly import, that we are to resolve all the Proceedings of God towards his Creatures into no other Reason, but that of his Arbitrary Will, and absolute Dominion over them?

We answer; That the Words are to be explain'd in the same Sense with those foregoing, the Apostle still continuing the Thread of the same Argument; we are therefore to understand them, as only respecting some peculiar Distinctions of God's Favour to Men

in this World, and his excluding others from sharing in the Benefits of them.

1. As to the arbitrary Distribution of his Favours, 'tis easily accounted for: For 'tis manifest, That by such a Procedure he does no Person any Wrong; and so far, as our Saviour argues, *'tis lawful* for him *to do what he will with his own*, Mat. 20. 15. But shall we infer from hence, That all those, to whom the distinguishing Marks even of his Spiritual Favours are not dispens'd, must be the Objects of his Hatred and Reprobation? 'Twill be granted, I suppose, a special Favour to be admitted within the Pale of the Church by Baptism; Shall we therefore conclude, that all the Children born of Christian or of Heathen Parents, who dy'd unbaptiz'd, are certainly damn'd? No Man will say so. We argue then, That Acts of Spiritual Favours themselves may be dispens'd to Men, without any Advantage drawn from them in Favour of this Doctrine; provided at the same time, those to whom God does not dispense them, are not left in a State wherein they must unavoidably and eternally perish, or be in a worse Condition than if they had never been.

But does not the Apostle, in saying the Potter has also Power to make a Vessel to Dishonour, seem directly to intend that God is not only arbitrary in dispensing his Favours, but in the Execution of his Wrath and Vengeance.

To this we reply, in the next place,

2. That Comparisons do not run, in all Respects, exactly parallel; and therefore 'tis a common Maxim, that they are not strictly argumentative: But however, the Arguments drawn from them are to be carry'd no further, than agrees with the Reason and Principal Scope of them; and that we have observ'd,

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as to the Text, relates only to God's Temporal Dealings with Men in their preſent State.

'Tis therefore puſhing the Parallel further than the Apoſtle deſign'd, to argue from it, that God may, if he pleaſes, put Men, after he has brought them into the World, into a worſe Condition (a Condition infinitely worſe) than if they had never *been*; becauſe this is a Conſideration which affects the Juſtice of God: But the Clay in the Hands of the Potter is no Object of Juſtice; it has no Senſe of Pain or Miſery, in the Diſhonour done to it.

Tho' 'tis certain then, That God's Power o'er inſenſate Matter is wholly arbitrary and deſpotick; becauſe the Exerciſe of ſuch a Power is no ways repugnant to the Attributes or Perfections of his Nature: Yet the Caſe is very different as to his dealing with rational Creatures, whom he has made capable of Happineſs or Miſery; becauſe not only his Juſtice, but his Wiſdom, his Holineſs and Goodneſs, are concern'd in his Proceedings towards ſuch Creatures: And tho' they cannot indeed *reſiſt his Will*, or preſcribe Laws to him, yet his own Nature is a Law to it ſelf; and without denying himſelf, which 'tis impoſſible for him to do, he *can* will nothing, but what is agreeable to theſe Attributes; what is every way wiſe and juſt, holy and good.

Might not God however, without any Injury to his Attributes, predeſtinate rational Creatures to a perfect and endleſs State of Happineſs? We do not deny, but abſolutely ſpeaking he might. Yet with reſpect to the preſent Condition of Men, whom he has put in a State of Tryal, we think God has not ſo predeſtinated them, becauſe this would be contrary to the very Ends and *Reaſons* of his putting them into ſuch State; and we are aſſur'd, he can *will* nothing contrary to his Wiſdom.

3. To justify the Doctrine of Absolute Reprobation, those Words of *Solomon* are more particularly made use of; *God made all things for himself, even the wicked for the Day of Evil*, Prov. 16. 4. 'Tis argued from these Words, That God decreed to make some Persons with a direct Intention of glorifying his Justice in the Punishment of their Wickedness; which is, in effect, to say, he dispos'd the Order of Causes in such a Manner, that they should certainly make an ill Use of their Liberty, for otherwise his Decree might have been frustrated: And this is, in other Words, to say what ought not to be imagin'd except in Confutation of so Blasphemous an Error, that God made Men wicked. Were this the Design of *Solomon*, he had put an unanswerable Argument into the Hands of the *Manichees*, to support their Doctrine of Two Gods: For a good God could never have designedly created Man, to make him the everlasting Object of his Hatred and Indignation; as the Author of the Book of *Wisdom* argues very justly, That God *loveth all things that are, and abhors* nothing *that he has made; for neither would he have made* any thing, *if he had hated it*, Wisd. 11. 20.

The most therefore that can be inferr'd from the Words is, That wicked Men who have abus'd that Mercy and Goodness of God, which should have led them to Repentance, shall finally feel the Effects of his avenging Justice; but tho' this Interpretation is very true in it self, it does not seem to give us the proper Sense of the Place.

Solomon is here speaking of the Providential Dispensations of God in this Life, and the Reasons of our acquiescing entirely in them: And therefore 'tis most agreeable to his Design, to explain the Words thus; That God can serve the Ends of his Providence by wicked Men, without being the Author of their Wickedness, and make them the Instruments of his Justice to punish other wicked Men; or of his Fatherly

Fatherly Chaſtiſements, *in the Day of Evil*; that is, of Adverſity or Perſecution, to exerciſe the Faith and Vertues of good Men.

3. As to thoſe Texts of Scripture, wherein God is ſaid to have blinded the Eyes of Men, that they ſhould not ſee, and to have hardned their Hearts: I ſhall only obſerve, that theſe Expreſſions are not to be underſtood of any poſitive Act in God, but of his permiſſive Will: 'Tis from his Clemency or Forbearance, or the Lenity of his Judgments towards them, that Sinners take occaſion to harden themſelves; and this way of ſpeaking in Scripture is agreeable to the common Forms of Speech among Men. 'Tis uſual for us to attribute an Effect to our ſelves, as the Cauſe of it, tho' it happens directly contrary to our Intention: As when we ſay to a Friend, we are come to trouble him, when we have no ſuch Deſign, but are only apprehenſive that our coming may occaſion ſome Trouble or Inconvenience to him. So again, when an undutiful Child makes an ill Uſe of the Indulgence of his Parents towards him, they are apt to charge themſelves with having ſpoil'd or ruin'd him; that is, with what was the fartheſt thing in the World from their Deſign and Intention. I have obſerv'd, on another Occaſion, that our Saviour ſpoke after this Manner, when he ſaid, *He came not to ſend Peace but a Sword.* His real Intention was to ſend Peace, but (which occaſion'd his ſpeaking after this manner) he foreſaw his coming would ſometimes accidentally produce a different Effect.

We are to ſuppoſe God uſing the ſame Form of Speech in the fore cited Texts; which are brought to prove, that he blinds and hardens Reprobates, in order to the Execution of his Decrees againſt them and then thoſe Texts may be eaſily accounted for without admitting a Doctrine, equally unreaſonable and impious.

3. I shall now in the Third and last Place, with as much Brevity as possible, make a useful Improvement or two from what has been said. And,

1. If our Title to eternal Life be not absolute but conditional, let us take all imaginable Care to perform the Conditions upon which it is proms'd. 'Tis the Apostle's own Inference, from what he had asserted concerning the Incapacity impenitent Sinners are under, of entering into the Kingdom of God; *Let us therefore fear*, says he, *lest a Promise being left us of entring into his Rest, any of you should seem to come short of it*, Heb. 4. 1. 'Tis now in our own Choice, whether we will be eternally happy or miserable. So that by the Grace of God, which is always ready to prevent and follow us, and make us continually dispos'd to every good Work, we may effectually apply to our selves those comfortable Words of our Apostle in another Place; *Behold now is the accepted time*; *behold now is the Day of Salvation*, 2 Cor. 6. 2.

And shall we make it a Question, whether we shall lay hold of, or neglect so great Salvation? Or is it an indifferent thing, when Life and Death are set before us, which of them we prefer. Not a Life of a few Moments continuance, and chequer'd with Variety of Troubles and evil Accidents: Not a Death, which will bring us to a State of Insensibility, where all Things are forgotten, or which will put an End to our Being, and to our Misery at once; but a Life wherein we may be properly said to live, and like our selves: For we shall then live up to the Order, and Perfection, and Dignity of our Nature; we shall then more intimately know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom he has sent; and we shall love them in Proportion as our Knowledge of their Excellencies is enlarg'd, and be entirely belov'd by them. A *Death*, on the other Hand, which instead

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of terminating in Loss of Life, will consign us over to all the Miseries that are terrible to our Apprehensions, and greater perhaps than we do or can at present apprehend.

When two such different Prospects are open'd to us, one would think there should be no Room for Deliberation, which of them we should turn our Eyes upon. Let us therefore resolve to acquit our selves like Men, and chuse the better Part. And I cannot better enforce such a Resolution, than in the Words of God himself by *Moses*, deliver'd after so very solemn and awful a Manner; *I call Heaven and Earth to Record this Day, that I have set before you Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing; therefore chuse Life*, Deut. 30. 19.

2. Let us frequently and impartially examine our selves by the Rule of God's Word; Whether we have perform'd the Conditions upon which Life is promis'd, or not. And if we have been faithful in the Discharge of our Duty, there will be no great Difficulty in coming to a Resolution as to this Point. For there are certain and plain Evidences in Scripture, upon which we are to proceed in the Trial of our selves. *In this*, says the Apostle St. *John*, *the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil; whosoever doth not Righteousness is not of God*, 1. Joh. 3. 10. And *Ver.* 21. *If our Hearts condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God.* Accordingly in the former Chapter, he exhorts Christians to persevere in their Duty, *That when God shall appear, they may have Confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his Coming*; because, says he, *ye know, that every one that doth Righteousness, is born of him*, Ver. 28, 29.

Does it not then most highly concern us, tho' it were only for the Peace and Satisfaction of our own Minds, to know what good Evidences we are able to produce of our Title to Heaven? How can a Man indeed, who thinks at all, have any easy or compos'd

Thoughts, who at the ſame time he believes an Eternity of Happineſs or Miſery to come, conſiders himſelf, I do not ſay in a damnable or very dangerous, but even in a doubtful State? Let him examine himſelf, in Caſe any Difficulty ſhould ariſe, which might affect his Life or Eſtate, what Diligence he would uſe to get clear of it; and then let him anſwer it to his own Reaſon and Conſcience, if he can, that when Life eternal is the thing in Queſtion, and he knows his Title to it, at the beſt, to be very precarious, yet he can be eaſy and chearful, as if all were ſecure, and he had nothing to fear.

If we would then be wiſe, in a Matter of the laſt Importance to us; if we would not deceive our ſelves by falſe and deluſory Hopes of Heaven, ſaying *Peace, Peace*, where there is no Peace, we ſhall think it a Duty incumbent on us, frequently to examine into the State of our Souls, and to judge of it by thoſe Laws here, whereby we muſt be finally judg'd hereafter. And which all along ſuppoſe our Happineſs or Miſery under the Direction of God's Grace in our own Choice.

I cannot conclude all that has been ſaid more pertinently, than in the Words of the wiſe Son of *Syrach*, "Say not thou, 'tis through the Lord, that I fell "away; for thou oughteſt not to do the thing that "he hateth. Say not thou, he hath cauſed me to "err; for he hath no need of the ſinful Man. The "Lord hateth all Abomination; and they that fear "God love it not. He himſelf made Man in the be"ginning, and left him in the Hand of his Counſel "——He hath ſet Fire and Water before thee, "ſtretch forth thy Hand to whether thou wilt. Be"fore Man is Life and Death, and whether him li"keth ſhall be given him, *Eccluſ.* 15. 11, ——17.

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SERMON XII.

The Sin and Folly of all fraudulent or unjuſt Practices. The ordinary Methods of God's *avenging* Juſtice againſt them in this World: With the Reaſons of it.

1 THESS. iv. 6.

That no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother in any Matter; for the Lord is the Avenger of all ſuch.

THeſe Words are ſometimes explain'd in a Senſe very different from the literal and more obvious Meaning of them; and it muſt be granted both the original Words, and the Scope of the Apoſtle, ſeem to juſtify that Senſe. Yet as I piouſly hope, 'tis of no great Uſe at preſent to mention it in any Chriſtian Auditory, I ſhall directly proceed to diſcourſe on the Text in the Acceptation, which the common Verſion of our Bible plainly intends. And therefore in the marginal Note, to defraud is render'd to *oppreſs* or *over-reach*.

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I shall therefore consider the Words as a Caution to us, to avoid all Acts of Fraud and Injustice in our Dealings with other Men.

Let no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother in any Matter, for the Lord is the Avenger of all such.

Here then we have a Prohibition, and a very powerful Reason to enforce it. I shall speak to both of them particularly.

As to the Prohibition, 'twill be proper to speak to these three Things.

First, The Extent of it, with Respect to the Subject; Let *no Man* go beyond, or defraud.

Secondly, With Respect to the Object; Let *no Man go beyond or defraud* his Brother.

Thirdly, With Respect to the Occasion or Circumstances of committing any Fraud; Let *no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother* in any Matter.

First, This Prohibition is of universal Extent to all Mankind. That the Laws of reveal'd Religion expressly condemn all manner of Fraud and Injustice, by whomsoever committed, is too evident to need any Proof. There are many plain and particular Precepts, both in the Old and New Testament to this End: What I would observe, is, That to be sincere in our Words, Promises, and Contracts, to be just and righteous in all our Dealings, are Duties which arise from the natural and eternal Laws of right Reason.

Nay, the Atheist himself, who disowns all natural Distinction of Good and Evil; yet if we will shew any Reason why he should be suffer'd to live in Society, must upon his own Principles come within this Prohibition. For by pretending that Religion is only a Contrivance of Policy, the better to keep Mankind in Awe, and secure their civil Rights and Properties from Violence or Invasion; he plainly confesses

feſſes theſe two Things. 1*ſt*. That the Belief of a God, and of the other common Principles of Religion, have a proper and direct Tendency to make Men juſt and faithful in their ſeveral Callings and Profeſſions. And, 2*dly*, That if Men were under no Obligation to obſerve the Rules of Juſtice, or mutual Fidelity, the good Order and Peace of Society could be no longer preſerv'd. For as *Cicero* well obſerves, and lays it down as a Maxim, *Jus & Equitas vincula Civitatis*. A Principle of Juſtice and Equity, where Men regulate their Conduct by it, is that which preſerves Civil Government from falling into utter Confuſion and Diſorder.

So that the Atheiſt, tho' he believe himſelf under no Engagement, from any Religious Conſiderations, to practiſe the Rules of Juſtice, ought however to obſerve them on a *civil* Account, or elſe to own himſelf unfit for human Society and Converſation.

'Tis therefore a Rule, which takes in all Mankind, *Chriſtians* and *Jews*; Perſons who are guided by the mere Light of natural Religion, and even thoſe who do not profeſs *any* Religion; *That no Man go beyond* and *defraud*.

Secondly, I proceed in the ſecond Place to conſider the Extent of this Prohibition, with reſpect to the Object; Let *no Man go beyond or defraud* his Brother.

All Mankind are in a very proper Senſe our Brethren. We have all one Original, and one common Father. Of one Blood God has made all the Nations of the Earth. And this of it ſelf is a ſtrong Reaſon to perſuade us to all mutual Offices of Humanity and Kindneſs. The Relation of a Brother is very engaging: It ſhould in Proportion oblige us to acquit our ſelves with all Tenderneſs and Fidelity towards our common Brethren. The Prophet particularly makes it an Argument, why he ſhould not

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go beyond or defraud our Brother, *Mal.* 2. 10. *Have we not all one Father; hath not One God created us, why do we deal treacherously every Man against his Brother?*

If the Distance and Distinction of Nations do not cancel or destroy the common Obligations of Humanity, much less does the Difference of Condition destroy it, among Persons of the same Community. In order to the Welfare of which, the different Circumstances of Men are wisely appointed by God, and indeed absolutely necessary. *All Men*, says the Son of *Syrach*, *are from the Ground; and Adam was created from the Earth. In much Wisdom hath the Lord divided them, and made their Ways diverse*, Eccluſ. 23. 10, 11. This Consideration, which resolves the Distinction of high and low, rich and poor in this World, into the wise Reasons of God's Providence, should teach the rich to bear themselves with Temper and Moderation upon the Superiority of their Condition, and not to look upon poor People with Contempt and Disdain, much less to imagine, that they have a Right to insult or oppress them. For tho' 'tis an Effect of the wise Dispositions of Providence, that the Rich and the Poor should meet together in this World; it being impossible, except God were to interpose by a continued Series of Miracles, that it should be otherways; or that the common Good and Happiness of Society could be so well provided for, upon the levelling Scheme: The Rich ought notwithstanding to pay the Poor all the common Offices, both of Justice and Charity, tho' it were but from this one Consideration, That *the Lord is the Maker of them all*, Prov. 22. 2.

We are oblig'd for this general Reason to walk honestly to them who are without; that is, to do Justice to all Men we have any Commerce with, consider'd merely as Men: Yet Christianity still enforces this Duty, from a new and spiritual Relation, with Respect to our Brethren in Christ Jesus; in whom we are therefore said by the Apostle *to be all one*, at what

Distance

Distance soever God has plac'd us in our outward Circumstances or Condition of Life, *Gal.* 3. 28.

The same Apostle is very particular, 1 *Cor.* 12. in representing the Nature of this spiritual Relation, and the proper Duties arising from it. He there shews us, after what manner we are incorporated under Christ our Head, and how we ought by Virtue of this Union, like the Members of the natural Body, to have a reciprocal and tender Regard to one another's Interests. Which may be one special Reason why, in all his Epistles, his common and ordinary Appellation of Christians is that of *Brethren*.

Let us therefore resolve to keep strictly to the Rules of Justice, in all our Dealings with other Men, both as they are Men, and as they are Christians: Both on the Account of our natural and spiritual Relation to them. Let *no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother*, in *either* Relation.

Thirdly, I am to consider the Extent of this Prohibition, with Respect to the Occasion or Circumstances of committing any Fraud; Let *no Man go beyond or defraud his Brother* in any Matter: That is, upon any Account, or in any kind whatever.

1. We are not permitted a fraudulent or unjust Action *on any Account*. There are two Cases especially, to mention no other at present, wherein Men are apt to think themselves very excusable at least, in the Measures they take to defraud or circumvent those they have to do with. As, 1. When they labour under any very pressing Necessities; when they want those necessary Supports of Life for themselves, or their Dependants, which their Neighbours may well be suppos'd to spare out of their Abundance: Or, 2*dly*, When they have an Opportunity of making Reprisals upon their Enemies, and injuring those in their turn, who had first injured or defrauded them.

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As to the former of these Cases, whatever Extremities People are under, 'twill by no means authorize a Criminal Action; and such is every fraudulent and unjust Action. We must not do Evil upon any Pretence or Prospect of doing the greatest Good, or Service to Mankind in general; much less upon any private Views of Advantage to our selves.

The wise Disposer of all things, who has brought Men under such hard and unhappy Circumstances, is able, when he pleases, to relieve them: He *can* do it by a great many secret Methods of his good Providence, tho' they are not able to discover them; and if they live in his true Faith and Fear, if they commit themselves unto him, *in well-doing*, as unto a Faithful Creator, they may comfortably hope from the Goodness of his Providence, that he *will* do it. To encourage them in such a Hope, there are innumerable Exhortations in Scripture: I shall here only mention Two of them; *Cast thy Burthen upon the Lord*, says Holy *David*, Psal. 55. 22. *and* He *shall sustain thee*. To the same Effect is that Excellent and Comfortable Advice of the Prophet *Isaiah*, Chap. 50. 10. *Who is among you that feareth the Lord, who obeyeth the Voice of his Servant, and hath no Light*, i. e. no visible Means or Prospect of Deliverance; *let him trust in the Name of the Lord, and* stay upon *his God.*

Neither 2*dly*, will a Pretence, tho' we have never so fair an Opportunity for it, of making Reprisals on those who have injur'd us, justify an injurious or fraudulent Action. In this, I am sensible, the too general Practice of Mankind is against me; but if we profess our selves Christians, we are not to follow the Maxims of a corrupt World, but the Rules which Christianity prescribes; tho' indeed such a Retaliation is not to be examin'd by the Rules of a pure and strict Morality.

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Yet not to enquire into the Conduct of those, who are big with great Designs, and travel the *high* Road of the World, in order to make their Court or their Fortune; 'tis thought even in the ordinary Affairs and Commerce of Life, not only reasonable, but in some Degree commendable, for a Man to take his Enemy, or any one that stands in his Way, upon all the Advantages he can. So that it frequently happens, he who is the most vers'd in *the hidden things of Dishonesty*, or the best skill'd in the trickish Arts of unjust Gain; that is, he who has the handsomest Address in cheating and defrauding, in lying and dissembling, in circumventing and oppressing; in a word, in worming others out of Business, and winding himself in, especially if they have done him any real or imaginary Wrong: He, I say, in the Vogue of the World, has the Reputation, *such as it is*, of being the shrewd Man, and the wise Manager.

It cannot be dissembled, that Patience under Injuries, and a sincere Disposition to forgive them, are in a manner *unknown* Duties to a great Number of Christians: Not that Christianity forbids us to redress our selves for the Wrongs done us in a Legal Way; tho' in some Cases, according to the Rule of the Apostle, 1 *Cor.* 6. 7. Christian Charity rather obliges us *to take Wrong, and suffer our selves to be defrauded*, than to have recourse to a Legal Redress: Nay, in Cases which do not concern us in our nearest Interests, even common Prudence, considering the corrupt Methods which are crept into the Practice of the Law, will direct us rather to depart from our own Rights, than to seek Reparation by it: But what I intend is, in most Cases of Injury the Law is open to us; and where it is not, or where by Reason of the Power and Interest of those that have wrong'd us, we are in Danger of being crush'd or over-sway'd; yet we are by no means in an extrajudicial

dicial Way to retaliate the Wrongs done us, or to take upon us to revenge our selves.

In Cases where Legal Methods fail, or are not practicable, God has expresly reserv'd the Power of vindictive Justice to himself; *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.* Upon which Reason the Apostle backs his Exhortation, that Christians should not *avenge* themselves, but rather *give Place unto Wrath*, Rom. 12. 19.

General Laws cannot provide against all particular Cases, wherein Men may happen to be injur'd; and therefore Government being the Ordinance of God, his Providence seems in a more peculiar Manner concern'd, to supply the Defects of Human Laws, and where no Legal Redress can be had, to take the Matter into his own Hand. But,

2*dly*, As upon no Account, so neither let any Man go beyond or defraud his Brother *in any Kind.* There is no Indulgence or Dispensation for the least Act of Fraud and Injustice: We must not go beyond or defraud our Brother in a great Matter or a small; *That which is* altogether *right shalt thou follow*, says God *by Moses*, Deut. 16. 20. *that thou mayst live and inherit the Land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.*

The Promises made to the *Jews* under the *Mosaick* Dispensation, chiefly respecting their Temporal Peace and Prosperity, nothing could more effectually tend to promote these Ends, than a faithful Discharge of the Duties of Justice in all their Relations and Capacities, and in the utmost Extent of it. Christianity, by opening to us a clearer Prospect of a future State of Happiness, does not diminish but heighten our Obligations to all those Moral Duties, and Civil Offices, which tend to the mutual Advancement of our Happiness in this Life: And therefore our Saviour, in that one comprehensive Precept, of doing to others, as we would they should do unto us, has at once reinforc'd this Duty upon Christians, and extended

tended it as far as it can possibly be carry'd. For by this Rule we exchange, as it were, Persons and Circumstances with our Neighbour; and in this suppos'd Exchange, he is to have the same Usage from us, we could reasonably expect from him, were his Case really our own. So that no Man, who acts by this Rule, can on any Occasion form a Design of going beyond, or defrauding his Brother, except under the like Circumstances, he should think it reasonable to be circumvented or defrauded himself; and even if we could suppose him so far capable of perverting this Rule, as to think so, his Error would not alter the Nature of an unjust Action.

Having consider'd the Extent of this Proposition in the several Respects I propos'd to speak to, I am,

Secondly, To consider the Reason here added to enforce it, taken from a Consideration of the just Judgment of God against fraudulent and unjust Men. *For the Lord is the Avenger of all such.*

The great Day of the Vengeance of the Lord is reserv'd to another World; and there are many dreadful Denunciations of God's Wrath to be executed in that Day against wicked and unrighteous Men, especially such of them as are in any Eminent Degree uncharitable or Oppressors of the Poor: As, *that* the Mighty shall be mightily tormented; *that* he who sheweth no Mercy (and what obdurate Wretch or Oppressor can think of these Words without Terror) shall die without Mercy: *That* Riches shall not profit Men in the Day of Wrath; that the Rust of their Gold and Silver shall be a Witness against them; *that* they have heap'd up Treasure against the last Days; and that the Cries of those they have injur'd or oppressed are already enter'd into the Ears of the Lord, *James* 5. 1, 2, 3.

But becauſe unjuſt Men, who have ſet their Hearts upon this World, and appear to center all their Deſires in it, are more affected with the Conſideration of Temporary than of future Evils, which they look upon as Things at a great Diſtance, and not much concerning them at preſent, I ſhall, in treating of theſe Words,

1. Obſerve to you ſome of the ordinary Methods of God's avenging Juſtice againſt ſuch Sinners, even in this Life; and,

2. I ſhall endeavour to aſſign Two or Three of the principal Reaſons, upon which God may be induced to deal thus with them at preſent.

In ſpeaking to the former Particular, I ſhall confine my ſelf to theſe following Conſiderations.

1. That God ſeldom permits Fraud and Injuſtice to ſucceed long.

2. Where they do ſucceed for any conſiderable Time, or perhaps throughout the Courſe of a Man's Life, yet they render the Circumſtances of his Death ſo much the more wretched and deplorable.

3. Where wicked and unjuſt Men are ſuffer'd to live long, and, it may be, to die without any viſible ſigns of God's Wrath and Vengeance upon them; yet they ordinarily, if not conſtantly, according to the juſt Meaſures of his Providence, entail a Curſe upon what they have unjuſtly acquir'd. And,

Firſt, The Providence of God ſeldom ſuffers Fraud and Injuſtice to ſucceed long. This, Holy *David* obſerv'd in his Days, and in a very Elegant Manner repreſents to us, *Pſal.* 37. 36. how he had ſeen the Power and Proſperity of unjuſt Men, all of a ſudden, and by inſenſible Means, vaniſh and come to nothing; as if he had been entertain'd with a mere tranſient Viſion, or airy Scene of Imagination; *They paſs'd by, and lo, they were gone; I ſought them, but they could*

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no where be found. Agreeable to which is the Obſervation of the Wiſe *Zophar*, Job 20. 5. *The Triumph of the Wicked is ſhort, and the Joy of the Hypocrite but for a Moment.* And *v.* 17. *They which have ſeen him ſhall ſay, Where is he?*

And does it not frequently fall out within the Compaſs of our own Obſervation, that they who would be Rich, or have Recourſe to indirect and unjuſt Means to be ſo, frequently fall into ſuch Snares and Temptations, as not only render all their great Deſigns abortive, but in the Event really *prejudicial* to their own Intereſts. God himſelf repreſents it as an ordinary Method of his Providence, that he will call unjuſt Men, who enlarge their Deſires as Hell, one time or other to a ſevere Account, and blaſt their wicked Deſigns and Expectations in this Life. *Wo to him*, ſays he by the Prophet, *that increaſeth that which is not his: how long? and to him that ladeth himſelf with thick Clay. Shall they not riſe up ſuddenly that ſhall bite thee; and awake, that ſhall torment thee? and thou ſhalt be for Booties unto them*, Hab. 2. 6, 7.

And indeed had not God declar'd, that his Providence is concern'd in bringing to Light, and puniſhing unjuſt and illegal Practices; eſpecially ſuch of them as are attended with Violence and Oppreſſion; yet ſuch Practices in the common and natural Effects of them, are apt to diſcover and confound themſelves. He that is reſolv'd to puſh his Fortune at any Rate; muſt often engage himſelf in oppoſite Intereſts, and be oblig'd to profeſs Love where he hates; and ſometimes, to humour thoſe in whoſe Hands his Intereſt lies, to profeſs Hatred where he loves. Lying, Diſſembling, and Double-dealing, are abſolutely neceſſary to a Man that is reſolv'd to raiſe his Fortune, tho' it be on the Ruins of his Conſcience and Honour.

Now 'tis impoſſible for a Man, how nicely ſoever he may lay his Schemes, to practiſe theſe Arts for any

conſiderable Time, but the Diſguiſe will, at long-run fall off, and diſcover him in a true Light. Nay, the falſe Colours he put out will ſometimes betray him into thoſe very Dangers, he ſought to eſcape by them. They ſhall riſe up ſuddenly by one unexpected Accident or other, *that ſhall bite him.* And therefore Holy *Job* very well repreſents ſuch a Perſon, as forming ingenious Deſigns for his own Ruin. *The Steps of his Strength*, ſays he, *ſhall be ſtraitned, and his own Counſel ſhall caſt him down; for he is caſt into a Net by his own Feet, and he walketh upon a Snare*, Job 18. 7, 8.

Knaviſh and unjuſt Arts commonly diſcover themſelves; but 'tis the Intereſt of thoſe, againſt whom they are deſign'd, to diſcover them too. Now Intereſt is an awakening Principle, few Men are willing to be deceiv'd in what relate to it: And if they apprehend themſelves deceiv'd, nothing is apt to irritate or provoke their Reſentments more. And Revenge, which is too natural an Effect of great and violent Provocations, will, if poſſible, find an Enemy out; and where he is found out, is not eaſily appeas'd. Which is the Reaſon of that Wiſe Obſervation, *Job* 20. 22. *In the Fulneſs of his Sufficiency, he, that is*, the fraudulent and unjuſt Perſon, *ſhall be in Want. And every Hand of the Wicked*, thoſe very Men perhaps that formerly engag'd in his Deſigns, *ſhall be upon him.* The Meaning is, that when any one who has been guilty of notorious indirect Practices to the Prejudice of others, or it may be of the Publick, is preſum'd upon clear and evident Grounds obnoxious, all Perſons indifferently, but eſpecially thoſe he has more immediately injur'd, take a ſecret Kind of Pleaſure in hunting him down, and ſeeing Juſtice done upon him. For which Reaſon, as is farther obſerv'd at the 18th Verſe, he is often oblig'd to make what Reparation he can; for *Satisfaction* may be impoſſible, for the Wrongs he has done: *That which he labour'd for, ſhall he reſtore, and ſhall not ſwallow it down*; *accord-*

according to his Substance shall his Restitution be, and he shall not rejoice therein.

Thus, even setting aside the Consideration of God's just Providence, if we do but consider the natural Tendency of a knavish Practice it self, particularly when it is grown notorious, it cannot reasonably be expected, so long as the Passions of Men are concern'd for their Interests, that *Fraud* and Injustice should succeed long. But,

2*dly*, Where they do succeed for any considerable Time, and perhaps throughout the Course of a Man's Life, yet they render the Circumstances of his Death so much the more wretched and deplorable.

The longer a Man continues in the Practice of any Sin, the Guilt of it, when his Conscience is awaken'd, must needs, upon a moral Account, lie heavier and more disquieting upon him. But there is Reason to believe that the Guilt of dying and profligate Sinners is further very often inflam'd. by an immediate and just Judgment of God; and especially of known and publick Oppressors.

There are no obscure Intimations in Scripture to this Purpose. " As, that Fear shall come upon such " Enemies to the common Rights and Liberties of " Mankind, like a Whirlwind; That Destruction " and Anguish shall come upon them; That they " shall call upon God, but he will not answer; That " they shall seek him early, but they shall not find " him, *Prov.* 1. 27, 28.

For that *Solomon* here intends such Persons more particularly, as give themselves up to base and dishonest Practises, appears from their being describ'd at the 11th Verse, as lurking privily for *the Innocent*; to the End (*ver.* 11.) that they may find all precious Substance, and fill their Houses with Spoil. For so are the Ways of every one (*ver.* 19) that is greedy of Gain.

Holy *Job* ſeems yet more full and expreſs upon this Article: *What*, ſays he, *(Chap. 27. 8, 9.) is the Hope of the Hypocrite, when God taketh away his Soul? Will God hear his Cry when Trouble cometh upon him?* When the Terrors of Death, and an enrag'd Conſcience, compaſs ſuch a Sinner round about, and the Pains of Hell take hold of him; when a juſt and avenging God is calling in his Accounts, and he is aſham'd or afraid to produce them; or perhaps by reaſon of the Number and Diverſity of his Oppreſſions, and the Wrongs he has done, knows not which way he ſhould ſet himſelf to make them up; when after all, the Tempter with his evil Spirits is let looſe upon him, and ſuffer'd to fill his Mind with black terrifying Scenes of Horror and Deſpair; how can we ſuppoſe the moſt vile and miſerable Wretches in this World under Circumſtances, which can give our Minds more ſhocking or diſmaying Apprehenſions? And yet *this*, as we are aſſur'd, at the 13th Verſe, *is the Portion of a wicked Man with God, and the Heritage of Oppreſſors, which they* ſhall *receive of the Almighty.*

An unjuſt Man, who for ſome trifling and inconſiderable, or even for the greateſt Advantages of this World, has endanger'd the Loſs of his Soul, would then, no doubt, give the whole World, were he Maſter of it, for the Teſtimony of Innocency and a good Conſcience; or for one Beam of the Light of God's Favour and Countenance to ſhine upon him.

The Scriptures do not obſcurely intimate further, that the Injuſtice of Men does ſometimes provoke God to cut the Thread of their Lives ſhort.

That Intemperance and Senſuality, or Diſorders of any other Kind ariſing from a criminal Indulgence of the Paſſions, ſhould ſhorten the Lives of Men, natural and obvious Reaſons may be aſſign'd. And ſome Reaſons alſo, from the Nature of the thing may be given, why Men who follow unjuſt and irregular Arts of Gain, ſhould be inſtrumental in ſhortning the

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Number of their Days. And that is from the perplexing Cares and Anxiety of Mind which does *always*, and the inward Remorse and Fret of Conscience, which must of Necessity *sometimes*, accompany such a Course of Life.

The Abundance of the Rich, says *Solomon*, *will not suffer him to sleep.* But the Reason holds much stronger, with Respect to such rich Men, as accumulate Wealth by fraudulent and indirect Arts. And especially when they meet with Disappointments in any thing they violently thirst after, or have set their Hearts upon. Such Mortifications are apt to bring them, with *Ahab*, under great Disorder and Distraction of Mind, 1 *Kings* 21. 1, 2, 3.

But what I intend is, That God by a special Designation of his Providence, does frequently cut wicked Men short in the Career of their Sins and Villanies; not only by delivering them into the Hands of Publick Justice in this World; which he sometimes does; but by his secret Judgments and Visitations upon such Delinquents in this kind, whose Power, or Interest, or Policy, keeps them out of the Reach of Human Laws. *How oft*, says Holy *Job* to this Purpose, *is the Candle of the wicked put out; and how oft cometh their Destruction upon them?* And again; *What Pleasure hath such a Man in his House after him, when the Days of his Months are cut off in the midst?* Job 21. 17. 21.

The Words of the Prophet *Jeremiah* are very remarkable on this Occasion: *As the Partridge sitteth upon Eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth Riches, and not by Right, shall leave them in the midst of his Days, and at the end be a Fool:* i. e. His Designs, after all his Care and Pains, and Brooding upon them, shall prove abortive: He shall not see the *Rivers*, the *Floods*, the *Brooks* of Honey and Butter; He shall not live to enjoy that Flow of Wealth, or Pleasure, which he has form'd to himself so many

fine and delightful Schemes of. *When he is about to fill his Belly* (that is, according to the Design of this Metaphor, when he seems to have brought all his Designs to bear, and is full of Expectation to reap the Fruits of them;) *God shall cast the Fury of his Wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating*, Chap. 20. 23.

Yet do we not sometimes observe, that Wicked Men have not only a continu'd Run of Success thro' the Course of their Lives, but that they also live long, and seem at last to go down to the Grave in Peace? I answer, That God, for wise and good Reasons, does sometimes dispense with the general and ordinary Rules of his Providence; but this can be no Reason for any Man *in particular* to encourage himself in wicked and unjust Practices: Especially if we consider in the next Place,

3*dly*, That where wicked and unjust Men are suffer'd to live long, and (it may be) to die without any visible Signs of God's Wrath or Vengeance upon them; yet they ordinary, if not *constantly*, entail a Curse upon what they have unjustly acquir'd.

The Scriptures every where confirm this Truth. The Prophet lays it down as a certain and known Observation; That those who seek *to enlarge* their Possessions by unjust Methods, *shall leave their Houses desolate, even great and fair, without Inhabitant*, Isa. 5. 7. And the *Psalmist* speaking of such Men, says, that *they heap up Riches, and cannot tell who shall gather them.* But *Solomon* goes further, and says, they gather them for those, which (of all Persons) they least design'd them for. *He that by unjust Gain increaseth his Substance, shall gather it for them that will pity the Poor*, Prov. 28. 8.

It were endless to cite the several Texts of Scripture to this Purpose: And indeed, had not the Holy

ly Scriptures declar'd in these Texts I have already cited, and in expres's Terms, *Prov.* 13.11. that *Wealth gotten by Vanity shall be diminished*; yet there is nothing more agreeable to the common Observation of Mankind in all Ages. 'Tis very significantly expressed concerning such Estates, that *they trouble a Man's own House*, Chap. 15. 27. Instead of aggrandizing his Posterity, an unjust Man provokes God to visit his Injustice upon his Children to the Third and Fourth Generation. Not that a Man's Children are chargeable with the Guilt of his Crimes; yet God may very justly deprive them of the Effects of his Crimes, and make his Children refund, what he having no just Right in himself, could devolve no Right of upon them. Accordingly *Job* says expressly concerning such Men, *They lay up Iniquity for their Children*, Chap. 21. 19.

But I hasten to what I propos'd in the next Place; *(viz.)*

2*dly*, To assign One or Two of the Principal Reasons, upon which God may be induc'd to deal thus with fraudulent and unjust Men in this Life. And,

1*st*, Fraud and Injustice are Sins, which if the Providence of God did not curb and restrain by wholsome Methods of his Severity, would overthrow all Order and Government in the World; and there would be no Living, especially for Good Men, who are the peculiar Charge of God's Providence, in a State of Violence and Rapine, which would necessarily follow upon a general Amnesty, or Impunity of such Sinners.

For tho' Human Laws ordinarily make the best Provision they can against Offences and Disorders in this kind, yet powerful and prosperous Sinners often find Means to evade them. And besides, the

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Magistrate cannot take Cognizance of the hidden Things of Dishonesty, and such illegal Wrongs as are done by wicked Men in Secret. 'Tis the Prerogative of God to see and know every thing: His Eyes are in every Place, beholding the Evil and the Good. And the *Psalmist* makes this a Reason, where Human Methods fail, of his Executing Justice upon wicked and unrighteous Men himself: *Surely thou hast seen it; for thou beheldest Ungodliness and Wrong, to requite with* thine *Hand.*

2*dly*, Fraud and Injustice very often involve Men in other heinous Crimes, highly provoking to God; as of Oppressing the Poor, the Widow, and the Fatherless; of Perjury and Subornation; and sometimes, in very profligate Wretches, of Murder it self.

Now Oppression of the Poor, to say nothing of the Cruelty and Inhumanity of it, is highly provoking to God, as it reflects Dishonour upon his Providence. *He that oppresseth the Poor, reproacheth his Maker.* This may be explain'd in Two Senses. He that oppresseth the Poor, reproacheth the Wisdom, and Goodness of God: As if he had made Man, and then taken no Care of him; or made no proper and competent Provision for the Support of the Life he had given him; and so left him in a worse Condition than that of the most wild and savage Creatures, for which *Nature* has provided all necessary Supports of Life.

Or, 2*dly*, An Oppressor of the Poor reproacheth his Maker; As Man is created in the Image of God, he that crushes the Poor, or insults and treats him with Contempt, as if he were a Creature of a different Species from himself, offers an Affront and Indignity to God, in the Person of Man. *Job* makes this a Reason, why in his greatest Prosperity, he did not despise the Cause of his own Servants, even when

when they contended with him. *Did not he who made me in the womb, make them? And did not one fashion us in the womb?*

We are commanded not to oppress the Poor for this very Reason, *because he is Poor.* 'Tis a horrid Thing then, that Men should take Advantage from the Necessities of Poor People, and *make* their very Poverty a Reason of Oppressing them; which God has *made*, and which is in its own Nature a strong Reason, why they in particular should be protected from all manner of Oppression.

An Oppressor therefore of the Poor is a perfect Beast of Prey, under a Human Shape; and cannot be suppos'd to have reach'd such a Pitch of barbarous Injustice, except he have first divested himself of the common, and some of the most tender Sentiments of Human Nature.

So likewise 'tis a high Aggravation of any Fraud or Injustice, when it tends to the Injury or Oppression of the Widow; who being depriv'd of the Assistance of her Husband, and less capable on many Accounts of Soliciting her own Affairs, more easily becomes a Prey to wicked and designing Men. But let them hear that strict and severe Charge of God by *Moses*, and the Reasons upon which 'tis enforc'd, *Deut.* 22. 22, 23. *Ye shall not afflict any Widow, or fatherless Child: If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me; I will surely hear their Cry, and my Wrath shall wax hot; and I will kill you with the Sword: And your Wives shall be Widows, and you Children fatherless.*

Holy *Job*, in justifying his Innocence with respect to this, among other heinous Crimes, represents to us the provoking Nature and Guilt of it. *If*, says he, *I have held the Poor from their desire, or caused the Eyes of the Widow to fail; then let mine Arm fall from the Shoulder-blade, and mine Arm be broken from the Bone*, Chap. 31. 16. 21. To express his just Indignation at the

the very Thoughts of such a Crime, he doubles the Imprecation, and makes use of Two Expressions, which both signify the same Thing.

Injuries done to poor defenceless Orphans, cry aloud to Heaven for Vengeance on the Authors of them; and therefore God is in a peculiar manner stil'd *their Helper*. And for this Reason, *Solomon* expressly dissuades wicked Men from all unjust Invasion upon their Rights, that God will take upon himself to avenge the Wrongs done to them. *Enter not into the Fields of the* Fatherless, *for their Redeemer is mighty; he shall plead their Cause with thee*, Prov. 23. 10, 11.

As to Perjury, Subornation, Murder, and the like, these are Sins of a Scarlet Dye; and we need only mention them, to shew the Enormity and crying Guilt of them: And yet wicked Men, in the Pursuits of their unjust Designs, are sometimes drawn in to commit them.

We have a remarkable Instance to this Purpose, in the First Book of *Kings*, Chap. 21. *Ahab*'s First Overtures to *Naboth* for his Vineyard, had some Appearance at least of a good honest Intention; for he offers the Value of it in Monies, and more than an Equivolent in Lands: But when he found his Proposals rejected, Methods are taken to compass that by Violence, which could not be obtain'd by fair Means. Religion, and it was not the only time it has been made Use of to cover barbarous Designs, is pretended; and, in the first place, a Fast proclaimed. Upon this follows a Train of Villanies, answerable to such a prophane Beginning: False Witnesses are suborn'd, and solemnly perjur'd, and poor *Naboth* thereupon stoned to Death. 'Tis true, all this was done by the immediate and special Procurement of *Jezabel:* But because *Ahab* consented to what she did; and afterwards openly approv'd her wicked Measures, by taking Possession of the Vineyard; He also is direct-

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ly charged with having kill'd *Naboth*, *v.* 19. as if it had been his proper and personal Act.

I mention this to shew, that we are strictly accountable in *Foro Conscientiæ* to God, for all those Sins wherein our Consent or Concurrence is express'd or imploy'd, as well as for all those, other Persons are drawn to commit by our Advice or Command.

3*dly*, and lastly, Fraud and Injustice are very strong Arguments of an obdurate and corrupt Heart. For,

1. Every Man that is guilty of them, contracts a new and fresh Guilt on all the Occasions he has of making Reparation for the Wrongs he has done. His detaining what belongs to another Person, does not destroy that Persons Right to it. So that every Moment he has it in Possession, and may restore it, he does in Effect approve and repeat the first Injury. Which therefore without Restitution is not to be consider'd so much as one single Sin, as the first Link of a continued Chain of Sins combin'd together, and granting upon one another.

A Man that is guilty of these Sins, and continues in them, cannot be suppos'd ever to exercise any true Act of Repentance, or indeed to think seriously of ever repenting at all.

In order to Repentance, Restitution is necessary where it can be made; *absolutely* necessary; and therefore, if ever a Man designs to repent, he must design to restore what he has defrauded other Persons of; and then what End could he have in defrauding them? 'Tis true, a Man that commits an Act of Fraud or Injustice, in order to supply a present Necessity, may possibly be suppos'd to do it with an Intention to satisfy for the Injury he has done, when he is able: But for your great and wealthy Oppressors, if ever they design Restitution, there can be no imaginable Reason given, why they do not make it immediately, and out of hand; and consequently they

they ought to look upon all their Purposes of an After-Repentance, if they have any, to be one of the most vain, and empty, and chimerical Delusions in the World.

So that above all other Sins, there seems to be this peculiar in those of going beyond and defrauding our Brother, that they seem to be, nay, they are directly inconsistent, especially where Persons are not under necessitous Circumstances, with the *very Thoughts* and Designs of Repentance.

I shall now conclude all that has been said with a Word or Two of Exhortation. And,

1. *To those whose Consciences charge them with any fraudulent or unjust Dealing.* I would exhort such Persons to repent without Delay of it, and to testify their Repentance by making a plenary Restitution, if it be in their Power, to those they have injur'd.

I would advise them to consider farther, that every Act of Fraud and Injustice, how inconsiderable soever it may seem in it self, is a Snare and Temptation to further Irregularities in this Kind. The Rule, *Principiis obsta*, holds in this, as in all other Cases; we must beware of the Beginning of this Sin; and if we have been so unhappy as to fall into it, immediately apply proper Remedies.

An unjust Man is commonly under a Necessity, either of quitting what he has already got by indirect Means, which he cannot prevail with himself to do; or else of covering one Act of Injustice with another; which he therefore resolves to do. So that he cannot know where he will stop, or what other Advances in Sin 'twill be necessary for him to make; till by Degrees he grows harden'd, and the Spirit of God gives him up to work all Manner of Iniquity *with Greediness.*

2*dly*, *To those who are not already engag'd in any ill Practices of this Kind.* I would advise such Persons still to

to keep their Conſciences void of Offence, and beware of the very firſt Approaches to all fraudulent and unjuſt Actions towards their Brethren. For one Act of Injuſtice, we ſee, naturally leads to another; the Reaſon for the Second is as good as for the Firſt; and the Temptation ſtronger, the more we comply with it.

How many Perſons are there in the World, who would have abhorr'd the very Thoughts of thoſe Practices, which by Degrees are become ſo habitual to them, that they commit them without either *Shame* or *Remorſe?* Beware leſt by giving way to the Arts of unjuſt Gain at firſt, this do not in time become your own Caſe.

3*dly*, *To all Perſons in general*, my Exhortation is, that they would ſincerely and ſtrictly reſolve to practice the Rules of Juſtice. An honeſt and conſcientious Regard thereto, will give a ſecret Bleſſing upon our Endeavours, by ſecuring to us an Intereſt in the Divine Favour; and tho' our Condition may be low, yet 'twill be eaſy and comfortable, and ſweeten'd with the inward Teſtimony and Applauſe of our own Minds. But wicked and unjuſt Men can never have any Satisfactions of this Kind: How ſmoothly ſoever they may carry it, the Fears of an *avenging* God (they know what I ſay to be true) are now and then amidſt all their Enjoyments very troubleſome and diſquieting to them.

The Bleſſing of the Lord maketh Rich, to all the beſt Ends and Purpoſes of Life; and if it do not raiſe us to a Diſtinction in this World, yet it has this Advantage above the greateſt *Revenues without Right*, that it bringeth no Trouble with it; and that the End thereof ſhall be bleſſed.

SER-

TO
Mr. Edward Chaloner,
OF
GISBROUGH.

SIR,

IN Acknowledgment of the Favours, wherewith You have so publickly honour'd me, I have taken the Freedom to inscribe this Discourse to You; not from any particular Excellency in it, which I could have wish'd, on so inviting an Occasion, but because I had the Character of a Gentleman *pretty much in my Eye, when I compos'd it.*

And indeed, whatever false Notions of Honour may obtain in the World, the Idea *of a Gentleman, and that of a Christian, the more we examine and compare them, will still be found the more inseparable.*

I do not speak this, Sir, as if you had learned to distinguish between these two Characters; you perfectly understand that they cannot subsist a-part: Had not the Method of your Education, and the good Principles you derive from your Father's House, and the Ancient Family of Fowlis, *taught you the Necessity of uniting them, you think too justly not to have discover'd it your self.*

I must own there is one false Principle of Gallantry, which I have taken upon me to attack, that is difficultly rooted out of the Minds of Gentlemen, who in all other Respects shew a reasonable and lively Sense of Religion, and would suffer any thing rather than act contrary to the Rules of it.

I have resolv'd the Reason of this prevailing Error into a natural Bravery of the British *Nation, and the scrupulous Nicety we are apt to discover, in relation to every thing that may affect our Reputation or Honour. These Considerations may serve in some Measure to take off the* Odium *of a sinful Action at present, but they will never be able to justify it, according to that Word where our Lord has declar'd he will judge* all Men *at the last. If we profess our selves Christians, we must regulate our Conduct by the Laws of Christianity, and not by the Maxims of a corrupt World, whose Vanities we have renounc'd.*

A due Regard to this Rule should be had under all other Circumstances of Temptation to criminal Compliances. Youth especially, which dreads nothing so much as to appear disagreeable, as it is more apt out of a false Shame to be betray'd into such Compliances, ought to guard with the greater Caution and Sedulity against them.

You will pardon me, Sir, the Freedom of an Advice, which the more Complaisance and good Nature a young Gentleman has, the more he will have Occasion for.

Tho' in Truth, what I observe is not design'd so much for your Instruction as your Applause; and that I may encourage you to proceed in forming your Mind by the Principles, and your Heart more and more to the Practice of Religion.

This you are sensible is incumbent on You as a Duty; give me leave to observe further, That notwithstanding the Corruption of the Age, Religion has very much the Advantage of Vice in common Repute and Esteem.

Those who desire to live in any Credit in the World, do what they can to dissemble their Vices; or are asham'd at least to own them. And tho' there may *be vicious Persons, who look upon certain Irregularities as very excusable in the*

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Young Fellows, *and who are therefore so far from making a Secret of the Disorders they have fall'n into themselves, that their Hypocrisy lies the other way, and they think it a piece of Bravery to take Faults upon them they never committed; yet such profligate Libertines are inconsiderable, either for their Capacity or Quality. They are only to be found among your raw thoughtless* Beaus; *or such as have had little or no Education; or who are sunk in Ignorance, and corrupted in their Morals to the last Degree.*

It may, I hope, be truly said, That a more just and refin'd Morality begins to spread it self among us; that *a vicious Character is generally grown more shocking than we have formerly known it: In a word*, that *nothing is more necessary to make a young Gentleman appear with any Lustre or Advantage in the World, than the Character of Virtue and Sobriety.*

The Author of the Book of Wisdom, *who by his Knowledge of the World, and the gentile Turn he gives his Thoughts, seems to have been a Person of Condition himself, was so sensible in his Time of the great Advantage of such a Character, that he resolv'd betimes to make* Virtue *his Choice, and to contract himself to Her.* I lov'd her, *says he*, and sought her out from my Youth: I desir'd to make her my Spouse; and I was a Lover of her Beauty. *For this and many other Excellencies he admir'd in Her, he takes up a further Resolution of* actually *espousing Her, of cohabiting with Her, and on all proper Occasions of consulting Her.* Therefore I propos'd to take her to me, to live with me, knowing she would be a Counsellor of good Things, and a Comfort in Care and Grief.

This Excellent Person, from an Allusion to one of the most tender and delicate Passions of human Nature, with great Art insinuates to young Men, who are not suppos'd the least sensible of that Passion, how lovely and desirable a thing Virtue is, and what Happiness may be expected from her *Society.*

'Tis not, Sir, for want of Matter, that I have accosted you in the Language of a Preacher rather than of a Panegyrist ; *for to say nothing of your other good Qualities there cannot be a more copious or engaging Subject for Panegyric, than a Candid Ingenuous Temper of Mind, and a Spirit of universal Benevolence : But I have rather consulted what your Modesty would bear, than what was really due to your Character.*

I have only to add, That I am with the greatest Sincerity and Respect,

SIR,

Your most obliged,

and very Humble Servant,

RIC. FIDDES.

SERMON XIII.

The Reasonableness of Forgiving Injuries; The Common Pretences against it enquir'd into; And the Case of DUELLING particularly consider'd.

LUKE xvi. 37.

Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.

IT has been disputed; whether the Forgiving of Injuries be a Duty of Natural Religion, or only of Positive Institution. That it does not arise from any clear or evident Principles of natural Reason, is argued from the Writings of the Heathen Moralists. *Aristotle*, *Cicero*, and *Seneca*, Three of the greatest Authorities among them, are particularly cited to shew, that tamely to put up ill Usage and Affronts, is so far from being Matter of Moral Obligation, that 'tis an Argument of a mean and narrow Soul, and contrary to the great Fundamental Law of Self-Preservation. For tho' 'tis granted we meet in the Works of these Celebrated Authors with many fine

Sayings upon *Clemency*; yet they speak of it rather as an Heroick Virtue, which glitters in the Eye of the World, than as a Duty of strict Morality. So that they seem'd to have had the same Notion of it, which the *Papists* have concerning Works of Superarogation; they consider'd it as a generous and commendable Thing, on some Occasions to pardon an Offence; but what upon no Occasion any Person was really oblig'd to.

But Christianity gives us more Just and Refin'd Sentiments of this Duty, and, as will appear in the Sequel, more agreeable to the Natural Reason of the Thing it self. Yet because we do not always follow either Authority or Reason as we ought, without some further Prospect; our Blessed Saviour is here pleas'd to encourage our Obedience to his Command of pardoning the Offences of other Men against us, by a most gracious Promise, that this will be a means of procuring the Pardon of our own Offences against God. *Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.*

In Discoursing therefore upon the Words, I shall pursue this Method.

1*st*. I shall shew, that this Duty of Forgiving Injuries, is reasonable in it self.

2*dly*. I shall consider some of the Chief Difficulties which are pretended against the Reasonableness of it.

3*dly*. I shall observe with what Restriction we are here to understand the Promise of Forgiveness to those who forgive others. And,

4*thly*. and Lastly. I will conclude with Laying down Two or Three proper Directions, in Order to qualify us for the better Discharge of this Duty.

1*st*. I am to shew, that to forgive Injuries is a Duty reasonable in it self. In Order to which, it will be

be neceſſary to enquire by the way, what we are to underſtand by this Duty; and how far we are under an Obligation to it.

By Forgiving Injuries, then, I intend our pardoning any Offence committed againſt us, ſo as to entertain no Motions of Revenge againſt the Offender. Not but that we may, and in ſome Caſes indeed (where our Reputation or Intereſts are nearly concern'd) ought to ſeek Reparation for the Wrongs done us; but ſtill we are to bear no Malice or Hatred to the Perſon that did them: Nay, we are to ſhew him all the common Offices of Humanity and Reſpect, to wiſh well to all his real Intereſts, and if it lie in our way to promote them. Particularly, if he be under any Circumſtances of Diſtreſs, we are to contribute, as we have Opportunity, to his Relief; according to the Rule of *Solomon*, Prov. 25. 21. *If thine Enemy be hungry, give him Bread to eat; and if he be thirſty, give him Water to drink.*

Now the Reaſonableneſs of Practiſing this Duty in the Senſe I have ſtated it, will appear from the following Conſiderations: As it is an Act both of Prudence, of Goodneſs, and of Juſtice. And,

1. As it is an Act of Prudence. There is no Paſſion of our Nature more turbulent, or which ſets a keener Edge upon the Spirits, and hurries us into greater Diſorders, than that of Revenge. But how difficult is it for us, where we do not freely, and from our Hearts forgive any Perſon the Injury he has done us, to have no Deſire of Revenging it, in one way or other, upon him. And therefore, a Temper of Mind, which frees us from all the ill and natural Effects of a revengeful *Temper*, cannot but for that very Reaſon, have an intrinſick Virtue and Excellency in it. And indeed, if according to *Ariſtotle* himſelf in his *Ethicks*, Moral Virtue principally conſiſt in moderating our Paſſions, it might

seem a Question not so much, Whether a Disposition to pardon Injuries be a Moral Virtue? But, Whether, as *Aquinas* puts it, (22*d. Quest.* 157.) it be not the principal of all other Virtues? Seeing there is not any Passion more violent or unruly, than that which a forgiving Mind teaches us to keep within due Bounds.

But I observ'd, that to forgive an Injury, does not only import our Stifling all Revengeful Motions in Prejudice of the Party that injur'd us, but likewise an Inclination to do good to him. And in this Sense, 'tis Prudence to make our Enemies *sensible* that we really forgive them. For he must be a Person of a very obdurate and insensible Temper indeed, who is not mollify'd by Acts of Kindness and Condescension, in Return of his using us ill. Our Saviour compares such a Method of gaining upon our Enemies, to the Melting down hard Metals, by pouring Coals of Fire upon them. But whether our Enemies are to be soften'd by this Method or not, 'tis certainly a more prudent Course to try it, than to provoke them to new Injuries, by doing them all the ill Offices in our Power. For this is to feed and inflame a Passion, which we find it difficult enough to subdue upon the first (tho' perhaps slight) Provocation, with continu'd Aggravations of it; and which therefore we shall still be less able to sit quietly down, and compose our Minds under the Sense of. For Revenge is one of those Passions which preys upon it self, and visibly defeats its own Designs. What we propose by it, is to make our Enemies understand that we do not lie at their Mercy; that we are in a Condition to make Reprizals; or that we are in one Respect or other *above* them. And yet there is nothing which more discovers to them the Power they have over us, or affords them, if they really hate us, a fairer Occasion of Triumph, than when they observe how great Pain and Uneasiness the Endeavour

vour of Revenge gives us, and what Diſorder they have been able to throw us into. So that all Perſons, who would not betray that Weakneſs they ſeek to hide, are concern'd, at leaſt in point of mere Prudence, to put themſelves upon Diſſembling the Paſſion of Revenge, how much ſoever they may be inclin'd to act it. But without doubt, the moſt prudent Method of all is, by a hearty Forgiveneſs of thoſe who have injur'd us, to avoid the Occaſions of *Diſſembling* it.

2*dly*. To forgive is an Act of Goodneſs: Than which there is nothing in Human Nature more amiable, or praiſe-worthy. Nay, without this Quality, all the other Advantages and Talents of Mankind would loſe their Value, and turn to no Account to their common Benefit, but rather tend to their Ruin and Deſtruction.

Now 'tis needleſs to prove, that, if to do good in general be a Perfection of Human Nature, a good Action changes not its Quality when 'tis done to an Enemy. No; this, in the Senſe of all Mankind, has ever been look'd upon as the very Perfection of Goodneſs it ſelf, to do Kindneſſes not only without Merit, but in Deſpite of Provocation.

Theſe are the Terms, wherein God Almighty is pleas'd to ſpeak of his Goodneſs: That he is *ſlow to Anger*, *full of Compaſſion*; That he is *patient* and *long-ſuffering*; That he will be *merciful to our Tranſgreſſions*, *and remember our Sins and Iniquities nò more*.

And had not that All-glorious Being, who *is good and does good*, recommended his pardoning Goodneſs particularly to our Imitation; yet this being one of the Moral and Communicable Attributes of his Nature, the very Reaſon of the thing ſhews, that we ought to imitate it, and look upon it, not only as our Duty, but as one of our greateſt Perfections to do it; as our Saviour argues in a moſt admirable and

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perſuaſive Manner, *Mat.* 5. 44, &c. *But I ſay unto you, love your Enemies: Bleſs them that curſe you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which deſpitefully uſe you and perſecute you; that you may be the Children of your Father, which is in Heaven: For he maketh his Sun to riſe on the Evil, and on the Good; and ſendeth Rain on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt. For if ye love them which love you, what Reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the ſame? And if ye ſalute your Brethren only, what do you more than others; do not even the Publicans ſo? Be ye therefore Perfect, even as your Father, which is in Heaven, is perfect.*

The Heathens indeed by their Encomiums on Clemency, ſeem'd to have had a Notion, as if there were ſome peculiar Perfection, and of a *Divine* Extract, in this Virtue. And tho' they did not think themſelves under any ſtrict Obligation to practiſe it in private Life; yet they made it one principal and ſhining Character of their Heroes. But certainly, if it be an Argument of true Greatneſs and Bravery of Mind, in a Prince or a Hero, to pardon his Enemies; 'twas ſo proportionably, and in the Reaſon of the Thing, in private Perſons.

All the Difference lay here, that the Actions of Great Men, in a publick Capacity, were more conſpicuous, and expos'd to the View of the World: Whereas the private Affairs of Life, being of leſs Conſequence to the Honour, or Reputation of Men, they govern'd themſelves in them by other Rules. There is nothing, for Inſtance, *Cicero* ſtrain'd his Eloquence more in, than the Praiſe of *Cæſar*'s Moderation and Clemency towards his conquer'd Enemies. And yet this Orator lays it down as a reaſonable Rule for his own Conduct; I will revenge the Wrongs done me, in Proportion to the Quality and Degree of them: *Quemadmodum a Quibuſq; ſum provocatus.*

May we not ſay upon the like Inconſiſtencies, which we find in other Heathen Authors upon this Article

Article of pardoning Injuries, that as Vain-Glory was at the Bottom of all their Hearts, ſo it appears frequently from their Writings, they form'd their Judgments of Perſons and Things upon the ſame Principle? Or ſhall we ſay that theſe ſage Heathens argued as to the Matter we are upon, and as Chriſtians ſometimes do, not from their true Principles, but their Intereſts? So that when they conſider'd it as a Queſtion, which particularly concern'd themſelves, whether they ſhould forgive thoſe that injur'd them? They look'd upon it as a mean and unreaſonable Thing to do it. But when they examin'd this Queſtion by the pure Light of Reaſon, and without any Self-Regards, then they plainly diſcover'd the Reaſonableneſs of pardoning Injuries, and made it an Argument, as it really is, of a generous and great Mind.

3. To forgive is alſo an Act of Juſtice. The Perſon who has injur'd you, is your Fellow-Creature, and created after the Image of God; both theſe Conſiderations give him a Right to the Duties of common Benevolence and Eſteem; however he may behave himſelf towards you, yet there is a Reſpect due to the Dignity of Human Nature, without violating which you cannot hate or deſpiſe his Perſon. So that the Argument of *Moſes* holds good againſt all People that endeavour to gratify their Revenge upon one another: *Why do ye Wrong to one another, ſeeing you are Brethren*, Acts 7. 26.

Or your Enemy is to be conſider'd as a Member of Society, and having for that Reaſon an Intereſt in the Laws of it. Now the Publick Laws are deſign'd to protect all Perſons from private Inſults, or Acts of Revenge. For any Perſon to take upon himſelf to call his Enemy to Account, or to award ſuch Puniſhment as he thinks due to him, is to uſurp an Authority,

rity, which does not belong to him, and which he cannot, without great Injuſtice, exerciſe.

And therefore 'tis ſtrange, that thoſe Great Men before-mentioned, who make no Scruple of allowing private Revenge, never thought of ſo plain and obvious an Argument againſt it. For as they liv'd under Government, and were all of them well vers'd in Political Matters, they could not but know, that Vindictive Juſtice is, under God, the proper Prerogative of the Civil Magiſtrate; and that if private Perſons might, at Diſcretion, take it upon them, and make themſelves Judges in their own Caſe, no Government could long or well ſubſiſt.

I have mention'd nothing of our Obligation to the Duty I am recommending, as we are Chriſtians, and which Character enforces it upon us, by many peculiar Conſiderations; becauſe I was to ſhew the Reaſonableneſs of it, as incumbent upon all Men in general. Let us,

2. In the Second place, conſider ſome of the chief Difficulties, which are pretended againſt the Reaſonableneſs of it. And,

Firſt, It is ſaid, that by pardoning thoſe that have injur'd us, ſo as not only to forbear ſhewing them any Reſentment, but to give them freſh Teſtimonies of our good Will and Reſpect, is to encourage them to grow ſtill more inſolent and troubleſome to us.

I anſwer, that this is an accidental Effect of a Diſpoſition to pardon the Wrongs done us, and contrary to what in all Reaſon may be expected from it; there being a much greater Probability of making our Enemies *to be at Peace with us*, by ſuch a kind and generous Treatment of them, than that we ſhould provoke them thereby to new Inſults.

But becauſe this ſometimes does happen to be an Effect of our putting up Injuries done us by Perſons of a baſe and untractable Temper; we add further, that

that no Inconveniencies, which may attend the faithful Discharge of our Duty in any Kind, are to be pleaded against the Reasonableness of it. Were such a Plea to be admitted, there is scarce any Duty, either of Natural or Reveal'd Religion, which we might not on certain Occasions excuse our selves in the Breach of.

Yet why should we only consider the Inconveniencies that may possibly attend our pardoning an Injury, without taking into the Account those other Inconveniencies which will certainly attend our Endeavours to revenge it? Let us weigh these Two Evils, if we cannot wholly avoid either of them, one against the other; and that on the Side of Revenge, will upon Trial be found much the heavier.

For besides, that this is a Passion, which if we once give way to, is apt to betray us into great Indecencies, and sometimes the most horrid Crimes; 'tis extremely tormenting and vexatious of it self. Or rather indeed, it is not so much to be consider'd as a single Passion, as a Magazine of all the irregular Passions set on Fire of Hell at once.

'Tis objected further, that where we sincerely and entirely pardon any Offence, we shall be reconcil'd to the Party who gave it, as if he had never offended; and that this seems to be the Gospel-Notion of forgiving the Injuries done us, appears from hence; that we are taught by our Saviour to pray, that God would forgive us our Trespasses, as we forgive those of other Men; and are requir'd, by the Apostle, to *forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us*, Eph. 4. 32. Now those whom God forgives, he does not only receive to Pardon, but to Grace and Favour. From whence 'tis argu'd, that even those, who have prov'd false and unfaithful to us, ought, upon our pardoning them, to be admitted to the same Share in our Friendship and Confidence, which they had before.

But

But this appears to be a very unreasonable Condition of forgiving our false Friends, who are generally our worst and most dangerous Enemies; because however we may be oblig'd in Prudence, or Charity, or Justice, to forbear all Acts of Revenge against them, and pay them the common Duties of Humanity; yet Acts of mere Favour being Arbitrary, and depending wholly on our own Choice, why should we be under an Obligation to put those who have already abused them, in a further Capacity of betraying us, and perhaps of working our Ruin.

This being a material Difficulty, and which deserves to be consider'd, I shall speak to it in as clear and distinct a manner as I can.

'Tis granted then, that Repentance being the Condition upon which God not only pardons Sinners, but receives them to Grace and Favour; it seems to follow, from what has been said, that where our Friends discover a real Concern for their ill Usage of us, and are willing to make us any proper or reasonable Satisfaction, we are oblig'd to a perfect and hearty Reconciliation with them. Our Saviour himself appears to have put a Distinction between our forgiving Injuries in common, and those we receive from Persons we are under some near Relation to, or have contracted any particular Intimacy or Friendship with. With Respect to the former, it seems sufficient, that we banish out of our Minds all revengeful Thoughts, and observe all the ordinary Rules of Charity towards the Authors of them: With Respect to the latter, a friendly and entire Accomodation is indispensably requir'd. This we gather from those Words of our Lord, *Luke* 17. 3. *If thy Brother trespass against thee, rebuke him*; *and*, if he repent, *forgive him*. 'Tis certain, whether our Brother or Friend repent or no of the ill Offices he has done us, we are oblig'd to forgive him in the former Sense; his Breach of Friendship or Infidelity to us, does not destroy the com-

common Obligations we owe to him, as a Man and a Chriſtian. However he may treat us, we are to wiſh well to him, to pray for him; and, if his Circumſtances require, and our own permit, relieve him. This is a Debt we owe to him; both on the Account of his Natural and Spiritual Relation to us, and which no Conſideration can diſcharge us from the Payment of. The Meaning therefore of our Saviour in theſe Words, is, that to forgive our penitent Friend, implies ſomething more, than our paying him the Duties of common Humanity; and ſuppoſes, that we take him again into our Friendſhip, and give him proper Teſtimonies of it. Nay, as it appears from the following Words, we are to obſerve the ſame Meaſures towards him, how oft ſoever his Offence be repeated. *If he treſpaſs againſt thee Seven Times in a Day, and Seven Times in a Day turn again to thee, ſaying, I repent; thou ſhalt forgive him.*

But does not the Difficulty return here upon us with greater Force? Can any thing be more unreaſonable, or contrary to the Maxims, whereby the weakeſt, as well as wiſeſt of Men, govern themſelves, than that we ſhould be oblig'd to continue an intimate and friendly Correſpondence with thoſe, who have not deceiv'd us once, or twice, or Seven Times, but perhaps Seventy Times Seven; as our Saviour puts the Caſe, *Mat.* 18.22. What if ſuch a Friend ſhould be really ſorry for what he has done; what if we could be aſſur'd, that he is fully reſolv'd, according to the preſent Diſpoſition of his Heart, to do ſo no more: Yet why ſhould we truſt any longer to ſo frail and mutable a Temper, and of which Experience has ſo often convinc'd us, there is no Hold to be taken?

To this we ſay again, that Reveal'd Religion impoſing no Duty on us, but what is under the Regulation of Prudence; theſe Words of our Saviour are to be explain'd, as importing no more, than that an offending Brother, or Friend, upon his Repentance, ſhall

ſhall be admitted to all thoſe Teſtimonies of our Love and Reſpect, which do not, by reaſonable Conſtruction, expoſe us to ſuch Inconveniencies, as we can very ill bear.

God himſelf, when he pardons penitent Sinners, does not admit them to an equal Share of his Spiritual Favours. To ſome he communicates more Gifts, and intruſts greater Talents than to others; and many times, we piouſly believe, as they are prepar'd to receive and employ them. So that if we may ſtill argue from the Conduct of God towards us, to the Meaſures of our Behaviour towards ſuch Friends, as have fail'd in their Reſpects to us, and are heartily ſorry for the Offence they have given; it ſeems incumbent on us, ſtill to conſider them as Friends, and to give them proper Teſtimonies of our Friendſhip; yet, as to the Nature and Meaſure of the friendly Offices we do them, much ſeems to be left to our own Diſcretion, according to the good Qualities we diſcover in them, and the different Aſſurances we have of their future Fidelity, and good Behaviour.

This, I conceive, is all our Bleſſed Saviour can here be ſuppoſed to intend, except his holy Religion could be thought to deſtroy all the Rules of Moral Prudence: Contrary to what the Scriptures themſelves teach, when they require us to unite the Wiſdom of the Serpent, with the Innocence of the Dove; and make it the Character of a Wiſe Man, by a prudent Foreſight of any Evil, to employ the proper Means of preventing it.

In ſhort, how diffuſive ſoever our Charity may be to our Enemies, to our Falſe Brethren, or Friends; yet it cannot be extended ſo far, as to make them Maſters of our Lives and Fortunes: We are to love and do good to them, and receive them to Favour ſo far, as not to forget the natural and juſt Rights we owe to our ſelves. So that in this Caſe, the Argument of *Solomon* certainly holds good, and may be ap-

ply'd

ply'd to every Christian, *Be not righteous over-much; why shouldest thou destroy thy self?*

I do not speak this, as if Men were in any great Danger of neglecting their own most important Interests, and becoming profuse in their Favours towards those that have long or much abused their former Confidence and Friendship: No, the common and natural Inclinations of Men lye directly the other way. I am only to observe, that the Christian Religion, in the Sense we are commanded to forgive Injuries, requires nothing of us that is contrary to Reason.

Not but that God Almighty, as absolute Lord and Proprietor of all we have, might have made it a Condition of our pardoning Injuries, to depart in many Cases from our natural Rights. But whatever God by Right of his Sovereign Authority might have done, there is no Necessity, I take it, of supposing, with some Persons, that this Duty of Forgiving those that have injured us, has no clear Foundation in Reason or the *moral* Law, but only in positive Institution. But,

3*dly*, What if it should really prove in some Cases prejudicial to our Interests to practise this Duty, and to such of them as ought to be most dear and valuable to us? What, for Instance, is there in this World it concerns us more to preserve, than our Reputation and Honour? And yet to put up any notorious Indignity or Affront when they are attack'd, is so far from being a Method of preserving them, that according to certain Maxims which obtain in the World, it only exposes us to a more publick Contempt. These Maxims sometimes discover themselves among the Vulgar; but they chiefly prevail and have the most dangerous Effects among Persons of some Distinction for their Birth or Fortune. So that without allowing a Gentleman, when he is ill us'd,

to revenge himself, where Satisfaction is not otherways made him, on the Person who offere'd the Injury, tho' it be by shedding his Blood, or an Attempt at least to do it: Without allowing, I say, a Gentleman this Liberty, he will be look'd upon as very inconsiderable, either in his Enmities or his Friendships; In short, he will be reputed, what of all other Characters renders a Person the most insignificant, *a Coward.*

If this happen to be a Gentleman's Case, as it sometimes does, what shall he do? Or which of these two Ways shall he take? Shall he expose himself to publick Contempt and Shame, or to all the fatal Consequences of pushing the Life of his Adversary, and perhaps losing his own upon the Spot? That is, of dying in a very sinful Action, deliberately committed, and without any convenient Time or Composure of Mind, it may be without any Time or good Disposition at all, to repent of it.

Tho' this seems a hard Case upon a Gentleman, yet the Resolution of it is very easy. There can be no Dispute, but the Evil of Sin, of a Sin which may probably destroy him both Body and Soul in an Instant, and for ever, is rather to be avoided than the Evil of a Temporary Pain or Disgrace, which after all, he *ought not* to incur. For the false and corrupt Judgments of a wicked World, do not alter the Nature of Things. Just Praise or Blame does not arise from popular Mistakes, but from a Conduct praise-worthy or blameable in its self. If a Man be satisfy'd in his own Mind, that he acts as becomes him, and does nothing but what all wise and good Men will approve and applaud him for, why should he upon a fantastic and imaginary Notion of Honour, do a real Act of Dishonour to God, by sinning against him, and involving himself in the greatest of Sins, and which more directly strikes at the Image and Authority of God, that of shedding human Blood.

If

If ſtill your Ears be too tender and delicate to bear the Reproach of Men, a Reproach without any juſt or reaſonable Grounds, but you are notwithſtanding reſolv'd to comply with a wicked and unreaſonable Cuſtom out of a falſe Shame: Conſider, I beſeech you, how you will be able to bear thoſe Words of our Bleſſed Saviour, wherein he delivers himſelf in ſo moving and awful a manner, *Whoſoever ſhall be aſham'd of me or of my Words in this adulterous and ſinful Generation, of him alſo ſhall* the Son of Man be aſham'd *when he comes in the Glory of his Father, with the holy Angels*, Mark 8. 38.

But the Objection is puſh'd further. 'Tis pretended, that Gentlemen are not only concern'd in Point of Honour to take this Method of vindicating their injur'd Perſons or Reputations, but out of a neceſſary Regard many times to their Intereſts. They muſt otherwiſe tamely ſuffer themſelves to be kick'd out of an advantageous Poſt, and without which they know not how to ſubſiſt; or they muſt be oblig'd in certain Caſes to give up the moſt fair and juſt Expectations to make way for the very Perſon that deſpiſes them for it.

I anſwer again, all theſe Conſiderations, tho' 'tis great Pity there ſhould be any Occaſion for them, on the Account of a popular Error, yet are foreign and accidental to the main Queſtion. We do not enquire what Inconveniences a Man may draw upon himſelf by revenging an Affront, in the way we are ſpeaking of, but whether he may lawfully revenge it; and in Caſe he do not, whether in the Reaſon of the Thing thoſe Inconveniences ought to follow. We ſay they ought not, becauſe 'tis contrary to all Order and Equity that a Man ſhould ſuffer for doing his Duty; and no private Conſideration whatever, no View of publick Intereſt can juſtify or excuſe a ſinful Action. We muſt not on any Account do Evil that Good may come of it, tho' it be the greateſt

Good we can poſſibly propoſe to our ſelves or others. If we might be diſpens'd with in the Breach of our Duty, whenever any temporal Inconveniences attend a faithful Diſcharge of it, what Crimes might it not be lawful for us, under ſome Circumſtances to commit?

So that the Queſtion, Whether a Gentleman, when he has receiv'd a ſenſible Affront, may demand Satisfaction in the uſual Method, can only be reſolv'd in the Affirmative, by ſaying that 'tis lawful for him to do it. For 'tis abſurd to ſay, that a Man conſider'd as a moral Agent (and I hope every Gentleman is to be conſider'd as ſuch) may do, what he cannot lawfully do.

But how does the Lawfulneſs of ſuch a Practice appear? It muſt either be agreeable to the Law of Nature, or to the Conſtitution we live under, or the Principles of reveal'd Religion.

How Men ought to behave themſelves in a pure State of Nature, is not of preſent Concernment to us. Except perhaps to ſuch among us as hold, that our Hand cannot be ty'd by any ſubſequent or human Compacts, from defending our natural Rights and Liberties. So that if it be lawful for the *Hotentotes* to fight and devour one another, in pure Point of Honour, I do not ſee how the Advocates of thoſe Gentlemen, can deny the ſame Privilege to thoſe who live under a regular Government; for tho' there are poſitive Laws againſt ſuch a Practice, yet the Rights of Nature being ſacred and inviolable, thoſe Laws muſt be preſumed *ipſo Facto* void, and invalid, or to have been made by the Repreſentatives of the People, without their Conſent.

I ſhall not in this Place ſay any thing further on ſuch airy and wild Schemes of Government: But obſerve, that the Laws of the Conſtitution we live under, expreſly condemn ſuch a Practice; and to thoſe who believe Government the Inſtitution of God, the

the Laws of it have in Effect, and by neceſſary Conſtruction, the Force of a Divine Authority to them.

And if we live under Laws, we muſt obey them, and refer all Acts of Judicature, and ſuch are Acts of Revenge, to them. Eſpecially of a Revenge which puts the Sword, the proper Inſtrument of the Civil Magiſtrate, into the Hands of private Perſons, as if *they* were the Arbiters of Life and Death and had a Right independent of the State, to execute as many of its Members as might think fit to affront them.

This is not only to pretend a Commiſſion we have no Claim to, but to take it upon us in the laſt and higheſt Inſtance of Civil Authority; and of ſo high a Nature indeed, that ſome have even made it a Queſtion, Whether the Civil Magiſtrate himſelf have really ſuch an Authority? But if, as I make no doubt, this great Power of Life and Death be committed to him, what I intend is, that the Offence of any Perſon in uſurping it, muſt neceſſarily ariſe in Proportion to the Greatneſs of it.

And therefore, when the Apoſtle exhorts us, *Rom.* 12. 19. if we are aggriev'd or ill us'd, not to avenge our ſelves, but rather to give Place unto Wrath; becauſe Vengeance is the proper Prerogative of God, or of the Magiſtrate commiſſion'd by him, who is therefore call'd in the following Chapter (*v.* 4.) *a Revenger to execute Wrath:* This Argument, tho' it conclude indeed againſt all Acts of private Revenge, yet holds as we ſay, *a fortiori*, againſt ſuch of them, as are a direct Invaſion of the Magiſtrate's Office in the moſt Important Branch of it.

Yet it cannot be diſſembled, there lies an Objection which ſeems to be of ſome Weight againſt what I have ſaid. 'Tis obſerv'd that thoſe, who have the Execution of the Laws, are generally very favourable towards ſuch Perſons, as take this Method, for ſo they call it, of doing themſelves Juſtice, tho' it

terminate in the Death of their Adversary, provided, as they soften the Matter with another Term, they kill'd him fairly. From whence 'tis inferr'd, that the Laws in this Point seem rather enacted *in Terrorem*, than with a reasonable Design of being executed.

But we ought rather to distinguish between the Clemency of the Ministers of the Law, and the Reasonableness of the Law it self. If in Condescention to a wrong, but popular and prevailing Notion of Honour, among a People naturally brave and jealous of their Reputation, an undeserv'd Favour be shewn to Criminals in this kind, this does not alter the Nature of their Crime, or prove that the Laws may not justly punish it; but only discovers how averse Authority *it self* is to shed human Blood; and how much more private Persons are concern'd to stifle all those Motions of Revenge, which may tend to embrue their Hands in it.

But need I argue against the Unlawfulness of a corrupt Practice, which few, even of those who give into it, will pretend to justify? May they not as well ingenuously own, that *what they do, they allow not*; that one of the meanest and most *unmanly* of all the Passions, that of a false Shame overcomes their Reason; In a word, that tho' they know themselves wrong, yet in Case they should retreat, they do not know how to answer that formidable Question, *What will the World say?* Some Persons have indeed the Ingenuity to own all this; but where is the Ingenuity, where is the Spirit of a Man, in acting out of a servile Compliance with an unjust Custom against the clear Light and Conviction of their own Mind? Is not this plainly to discover, that *they hearken unto Men, more than unto God*; and however they may pretend to Greatness of Mind, yet in the true and most generous Trial of their Courage, which consists in a resolute Discharge of their Duty, *their Strength is but small?* They may as well therefore confess what they

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are conſcious of, whether they will confeſs it or no, that while they deſire to appear brave unto Men, they are notoriouſly Cowards to God.

Yet after all we can ſay againſt a wicked Cuſtom of ſo long Eſtabliſhment, and which Men who profeſs a Senſe of Religion are ſometimes carry'd away with; 'tis not Reaſon, but the Severity of the Laws, or rather perhaps the fixing ſome Mark of Publick Infamy upon it, which will be able totally to ſuppreſs it: The Fear of Shame having a much greater Influence on Perſons of much natural Courage, than the Fear of Suffering any other Puniſhment.

'Twill be needleſs for me to ſhew, that this Practice being ſo inconſiſtent with the Notion, as I have ſtated it, of forgiving thoſe that injure us, is no leſs contrary to the Nature and *Laws* of our Holy Religion, and indeed to the very Condition, which it teaches us is abſolutely neceſſary to the Forgiveneſs of our Offences againſt God. But this will appear further, from what I am to conſider in the next Place: (*viz.*)

3*dly*, With what Reſtriction we are here to underſtand the Promiſe of Forgiveneſs to thoſe who forgive others. For tho' our Saviour ſays here abſolutely, *Forgive, and ye ſhall be forgiven*; yet we are not to ſuppoſe, that there is nothing further requir'd in order to the Pardon of our Sins, than that we ſhould be of a Generous and Charitable Diſpoſition towards thoſe, from whom we have receiv'd any Ill Uſage. This indeed is *one* Excellent Qualification to recommend us to the pardoning Grace of God; but 'tis not a meritorious one; and without qualifying our ſelves in other Reſpects for it, we are yet in our Sins, and in a State of Enmity with God.

Nothing is more uſual in Scripture, than *abſolutely* to aſcribe an Effect to a Partial Cauſe, or Quality proper to produce it. Thus our perfect Reconcilia-

tion with God, is attributed to the Apostle to a simple Confession of Sin, 1 *John* 1. 9. Our Saviour, in his Excellent Sermon on the Mount, particularly, and without any other Condition, promises the Merciful, that they shall obtain Mercy; and the Peace-makers, that they shall be call'd the Children of God. Shall we conclude from hence, that barely to acknowledge our Offences against God, or to be of a merciful and pacifick Temper, is sufficient of it self (tho' we live in other Respects in a sinful State) to reconcile us to God, and make us worthy to be call'd his Sons? No; there is scarce any Important Duty of Religion, which has not some absolute and particular Promise of God's Favour made to it: But were such a Promise to be understood *exclusive* of other Duties, we should make short Work of the whole Duty of Man, and reduce it into a very narrow Compass indeed.

A Notion, 'tis true, obtain'd among some of the *Jewish Rabbies*, as if a Person, who set himself strictly and inviolably to observe any one Rule of the Law, should be interpreted to satisfy the whole Law which gave Occasion for that Maxim, *Qui operam dat Precepto, liber est à Precepto*, As to other Duties, which had no immediate Connection with that which he pitch'd upon as the *Test* of his Obedience, he might safely allow himself in the Breach or Neglect of them.

Tho' no Christian will openly advance or maintain such a Notion; yet it may be said, there are few Christians who have not their particular Religion; that is, one Favourite Virtue or another, most agreeable to their Temper and Complexion, their Way of Life and Education, upon which they lay the main Stress of their Obedience, and desire to distinguish themselves. Especially when they discover in the Scriptures any particular Promise of God's Grace and Favour, to what they find themselves most inclin'd

inclin'd to. Thus one Man is for Pious Acts; another for Charitable; a Third for Contemplation; a Fourth for Prayer; a Fifth for Hearing of Sermons; and so others, as comports with their different Sentiments or Inclinations, give the Preference to other Duties. I do not know whether the best of us, if we will retire a little into our selves, and examine our own Conduct, may not observe some Reasons, at least in the secret Motives of it, for this Reflection.

I shall not here take upon me particularly to expose the Folly, and fatal Consequences of a Partial Obedience: Every Man may be sensible, how in the Natural Order and Reason of the Thing, any one Sin impenitently liv'd in, does, by rendring him more insensible both to the Impressions of God's Grace, and of his own Conscience, lay him still more open to fresh and further Temptations. For as the Author of that most Excellent Book, (except perhaps that it abounds with too much *Wit*) *The Decay of Christian Piety*, justly observes, "Every Sin, tho' "never so small a one, is like those little Thieves, "which being put in at the Window, set the Door "open to all the rest.

But the Imprudence of such a Conduct, with respect to the dangerous Consequences of it, is not all; it directly puts us out of the Favour of God, and renders us incapable of his Pardoning Grace. For, says the Apostle St. *John*, 1 Eph. 3. 4. *He that committeth Sin*, (that is, Sin in any kind) *transgresseth the Law: For Sin is the Transgression of the Law.* And to the same Effect we are told by St. *James*, That *whoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, is guilty of all*, Chap. 2. 10. A Truth, which if we had not a Divine Authority to confirm it, is founded upon a clear and undeniable Principle of Reason. For, it being the same Authority which

enacts

enacts the whole Law; the Breach of it in any one Instance, is a direct Affront and Disobedience to the Legislature.

Tho' we should then endeavour to perform our Duty in many, or in the very most Respects; nay, tho' we have gain'd so great a Power over our Inclinations, as to be able freely to forgive our most inveterate Enemies, who not only have done, but continue to do us many ill Offices; yet let us not deceive our selves, that God will for that Reason, if we continue in the Practice of any known or habitual Sin, forgive us. No, in such a Practice, all our Righteousness shall not be mention'd; but *in the Trespass we have trespassed, and in the Sin we have sinned*, and liv'd impenitently in, *in that shall we die*.

Or, 2*dly*, These Words, *Forgive and you shall be forgiven*, may be understood as importing Forgiveness of Injuries, not properly as an instrumental or efficient, but only as a conditional Cause; Forgive, and by this Means you will render your selves capable of being forgiven; but otherwise how conscientious soever you may appear in the Discharge of your Duty, you cannot, according to the Terms of the Gospel, hope that God will forgive you.

And this Consideration lays so powerful an Engagement upon us to this Duty, that if we have the least Sense of Religion, or any Fear of God before our Eyes, we cannot dispense with our selves in the Breach of it.

We cannot indeed, while we harbour any revengeful Motions or Designs against our Brother; nay, while we are not sincerely inclin'd to wish well, and to do good to him; we cannot, I say, under such a Disposition, pray intelligibly, when we repeat the Lord's Prayer. And so long as our own Hearts condemn us, and tell us, that we want a necessary Condition of God's forgiving us, 'tis no less impious and irra-

irrational to desire of him the Forgiveness of our Sins, in any other Prayer.

For this would be to Petition Almighty God, that in favour of us vile and sinful Wretches, he would dispense with his known and standing Laws; that he would revoke the Word he has spoken, and for our Sakes in particular, alter the general Terms and Conditions of the Covenant of Grace.

No Man will be so wicked and audacious as directly to put up such a Petition to God; and yet every Man does in Effect, and by necessary Interpretation do it, who desires God to pardon his Sins, while he is in an unreconcil'd State to his Brother, or does not from his Heart forgive him. For, says our Saviour expressly, *Mat.* 6. 15. *If ye forgive not Men their Trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your Trespasses.* And after what manner, and with how sincere a Disposition we ought to forgive, he takes Occasion to observe, *Chap.* 18. 31. from the Condemnation of that wicked and insensible Wretch, who shew'd no Compassion to his Fellow-Servant; *So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you if ye* from your Hearts, *forgive not every one his Brother their Trespasses.* I shall now,

4. In the fourth and last Place conclude with two or three proper and short Directions, in order to qualify us for the better and more easy discharge of this Duty, which after all, it must be granted, there is some Difficulty in discharging as we ought. And,

1. To prevent the ill Impressions of any Injury or Affront, that may be done us, let us not think too highly of our selves, either as to the Justice and Regularity of our Conduct towards others, or our personal Merit.

In

In the former Reſpect we ſhould conſider how many our own Failings and Eſcapes are: How ordinary it is for us, either through Inadvertency, or Deſign, or a falſe Complaiſance, to fall into the common Topick of Converſation, *Scandal*; or to uſe thoſe other Freedoms of it to others, which we complain of as injurous to our ſelves: For 'tis rare, I'm afraid, to find that Perſon who obſerves ſo very ſtrict and exact a Decorum in what he ſays of other People, as never to offend with the Tongue.

If our Intereſts be more directly ſtruck at in the Wrong done us, it may be proper to conſider whether we have always ſo great a Care of our own Actions, as never to take Advantage of the Ignorance or Indiſcretion, the Credulity or Neceſſity of other Men. Or whether in the eager Purſuit of what we propos'd to our ſelves ſome conſiderable Advantage, or Honour, or Satisfaction from, we have not been ſometimes tempted to ſtrain a Point of Chriſtian Charity, and even of ſtrict Juſtice.

In either of theſe Reſpects it may be proper to take us down, when we begin to riſe in our Reſentments, that we ſhould impartially reflect on our own Conduct, and conſider our ſelves as Men of like Paſſions with thoſe we converſe or have to do with.

Another Occaſion of carrying our Reſentments too high, and which we ſhall do well to prevent by more ſober Thoughts of our ſelves, proceeds from an Opinion of their own Merit. A proud Man thinks every thing his due, and any little Slight or Injury offer'd him, is magnify'd in Proportion to the great Thoughts he has of himſelf. *Only by Pride*, ſays *Solomon*, *cometh Contention.* I won't ſay, that Pride is the ſole Cauſe of our giving way to the Motions of a revengeful Spirit; but it may be ſaid, that Revenge is never ſooner ſet on Fire, or inflam'd to a greater Height, than when Pride blows the Coals. So that 'twas a very wiſe Deſign of our Saviour, to recommend

mend to us in the same Precept, as if they were Qualities inseparable, a *meek* and a *lowly* Temper of Mind, *Mat.* 11. 31.

2*dly*, Let us put the most favourable Construction on the Words and Actions of other Men. A Person of Ingenuity, if any thing be said to his Disadvantage will consider whether it were spoken designedly; or through Inadvertency, through Ignorance, or Mistake, or out of a mere Inclination to divert. *There is one*, says the Son of *Syrach*, *that slippeth with his Tongue, but not from his Heart; and who is he that hath not offended with his Tongue?* As if he had said, the Errors we are apt to fall into, when we give our Tongues a more free Scope in Conversation, are so common and natural, that we should never interpret any thing as spoken with an ill Intention, till upon Examination we plainly discover it to be so. And even then, 'tis reasonable before we fly out against the Party offending, that he should be permitted to reccollect himself, and have some convenient time given him for owning or excusing his Fault, for as 'tis further observ'd by the same excellent Author, *If thou blow the Spark, it will burn; but if thou spit upon it it will go out.* His meaning I suppose is, that when we are provok'd by any rash or indecent Language, if he that offers it have any Ingenuity, our good Temper will be a likelier Method to bring him to a Sense of his Fault than a passionate and indiscreet Resentment of it. For 'tis much more agreeable to the Vanity of Mankind, to acknowledge any Error they commit, out of Inclination, or a Sense of good Manners, than to be oblig'd to it. *Ecclus.* 19. 16. 28. 12.

We should judge with the same Candor concerning any ill Action that is done to our Prejudice; and suppose, where the contrary is not notoriously evident that he who did it, had no malicious or unjust Intention; that he apprehended no Inconvenience would arise

arise to us from it, or if it did, 'twas accidental to his Design; his Interests happen'd perhaps to interfere with our own, and he is not accountable for the Consequences of a reasonable Pursuit of them, being under no particular Obligation to us from Gratitude, or Dependance, or Respect, to relinquish them.

Would we regulate our selves by these Rules in judging of any Injury that is done us by Word or Deed, we should cut off many Occasions of Enmity and Revenge, and find our selves in much better Disposition to practise the Duty I am recommending. But to render the Practice of it still more easy and agreeable,

3*dly*, Let us be cautious of believing any thing said or done to our Disadvantage upon the Report of others. There are People in the World, who signalize themselves in nothing more than in making it their great Business to sow the Seeds of Enmity and Division among their Neighbours: Or if there be already any Misunderstanding between them, to make the Breach wider. To this End, they find nothing more subservient, than to give a malicious turn to the Stories they have taken up, or the Secrets they pretend to reveal. *Solomon* complain'd in his Days of these little Emissaries of Revenge, as the most pernicious to the common Peace and Happiness of Society: *Where*, says he, *no Wood is, there the Fire goeth out. So where there is no Tale-bearer, the Strife ceaseth. As Coals are to burning Coals, and Wood to Fire, so is a contentious Man to kindle Strife*, Prov. 26. 20, 21.

A prudent Person therefore who desires to prevent his falling into any passionate Heat against his Friend or Neighbour, will either wholly discountenance such Incendiaries, or if he have private Reasons for employing them, will think himself concern'd at least to suspend his Judgment, and consider what is said only

only as *a Whisper*, till there be an Opportunity of having Matters fairly Scann'd. To this purpose too, excellent is the Advice of the Son of *Syrach*, *Admonish a Friend, it may be he hath not done it*; *and if he have done it, that he do it no more. Admonish thy Friend, it may be he hath not said it*; *and if he hath said it, that he say it no more. Admonish a Friend, for many times it is* a Slander; *and believe not every Tale*, Chap. 19. 13, 14, 15.

4thly, If the Injuries that are done us will admit of none of these favourable Constructions; if they are personally offer'd to us, and visibly with an ill Intention, and are moreover persisted in, then let us consider the Obligation we are under, to forgive them, 1. From the great and fundamental Duty both of natural and revealed Religions *Charity*. One principal Character whereof is, that *it suffereth long and is kind*; that it does *not behave it self unseemly*; *seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked*; *thinketh no Evil*. Or,

Secondly, From the Example of the great and eternal God, who patiently bears with us in so many known and deliberate Offences against his Divine Majesty; and *never* deals with us after our Sins, nor rewards us after our Iniquities. Or,

Thirdly, From the Example of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, our most merciful Saviour and Redeemer. Who in Return of the greatest Blessings and Favours to the Age wherein he appear'd, was treated in many Respects with an Indignity which human Nature ought to exempt the very worst of Men, and the vilest of Malefactors from. Yet even in the Agonies of that cruel and infamous Death he suffer'd, he put up a passionate Prayer to his Father for the Forgiveness of those who were the chief and immediate Instruments of it. Or,

Fourthly,

Fourthly, If we are not ſtill prevail'd upon by any of theſe moving Conſiderations to practiſe this Duty, let us conſider further, that we have no other Choice left us, according to the Terms of the Goſpel, but of reſolving either to do it, or of periſhing everlaſtingly; that is among other endleſs and unſpeakable Torments, to be caſt into that *outer* Darkneſs, where Envy, and Malice, and Revenge, operate with their full Force, and the Effects whereof are ſignificantly expreſſed by *gnaſhing of Teeth*: In a word, where an innumerable Company of damn'd revengeful Spirits, like ſo many Snakes and Vipers ſhut up in ſome dark Hole, will be continually hiſſing at, and biting one another.

There is no way of avoiding theſe dreadful and eternal Effects of a Spirit of Revenge in this World, but by reconciling our ſelves to God, and having our Offences againſt him pardon'd. And yet, as we have ſeen, there is no way of procuring ſuch a Reconciliation, without a hearty and ſincere Forgiveneſs of thoſe who have offended us. But,

5*thly*, and laſtly, Since without the Grace of God, all other Rules and Conſiderations will be of little Force towards enabling us perfectly to diſcharge a Duty ſo contrary to the Motions of corrupt Nature and the Maxims of Self-love; Let us under all Provocations put up our moſt fervent Prayers to God, that he would enlighten our Minds with that *Wiſdom from above, which is pure, gentle, and eaſy to be intreated*; and that he would pour into our Hearts that moſt excellent Gift of Charity, the very Bond of Peace, and of all Perfection.

'Tis a very juſt Remark which a Learned Divine of our Church makes on this Occaſion, of ſhewing how neceſſary it is we ſhould have Recourſe to a ſupernatural Aſſiſtance, in Order to qualify us for the Performance of a Duty, naturally ſo difficult and diſtaſteful to us. *The*

The Light of Nature, says he, *will convince a Man of many Duties, which it will never enable him to perform; and if we should look no further than bare Nature, this seems to be one cut out rather for our Admiration than our Practice.* What follows, tho' there is something in it of that fine Spirit of Satyr, which distinguishes this Author, yet is no less true: *It being*, continues he, *not more difficult, where Grace does not interpose, to cut off a right Hand, than to reach it heartily to the Relief of an inveterate implacable Enemy*, South, Vol. III. p. 161.

But whatever Difficulties there may be in this Duty, the Grace of God is still sufficient for us, and we have nothing to do to qualify our selves for a Conquest over them, but to pray fervently, and not after the manner of Dissemblers with God for his Grace; *the blessed and genuine Fruits whereof*, as the Apostle describes them, are, *Love, Joy, Peace, Gentleness, Goodness, Meekness.*

I shall conclude with the Words of that excellent Person, I have had so often Occasion to quote; as you find them, *Ecclus.* 28. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

He that revengeth shall find Vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his Sins in Remembrance. Forgive thy Neighbour the Hurt he hath done unto thee, so shall thy Sins also be forgiven when thou prayest. One Man beareth Hatred against another, and doth he seek Pardon from the Lord? He sheweth no Mercy to Man which is like himself; and doth he ask Forgiveness of his own Sins? If he that is but Flesh nourish Hatred, who will intreat for the Pardon of his Sins? Remember thy End, and let Enmity cease. Remember Corruption and Death, and abide in the Commandments. Remember the Commandment and bear no Malice to thy Neighbour. Remember the Covenant of the Highest, and wink at Ignorance.

TO

Sir Richard Osbaldeston, *Kt.*

SIR,

I Was at once prevail'd with to make this Sermon publick, and determin'd in the Choice of your Patronage; not that I have any thing to say in Behalf of the Performance, but that 'tis well and piously design'd. I have endeavour'd to Vindicate and Establish a Truth of great Importance to Religion, and which has a direct Influence upon the Practice of it. Were Authority of any Weight in Disquisitions of this Nature, I should have been silent in an Argument, wherein I dissent from Monsieur Malebranch, *who has defended his Opinion with that moving Force and Penetration of Thought, which is peculiar to him, and whose very Escapes are entertaining above all things in the World, to those who do not prefer Truth above every Thing. But I follow no Man, nor any Number or Distinction of Men, against the Evidence of Things, or what I apprehend to be so.*

And therefore, Sir, *I would not Entitle any thing in the following Discourse to your Protection, any*

further than you judge it Reasonable; not excepting what I have offer'd, by way of Inference, in Relation to the Church of England. *Tho' I know, there is no Gentleman in the Communion of it, more sincerely desires to see it upon a Lasting Foundation of Peace and Security.*

Yet I hope my Zeal for its Service, has not carry'd me beyond the Bounds of Decency. 'Tis hard, under Violent and Publick Provocations, in Things which affect us in our nearest Interests, and most tender Passions, to observe a Temper: But nothing is impossible to the Ingenuity of that Spirit, which actuates all the true Members of the Church; and which the Charitable Principle, that runs thro' all her Doctrines, and the Candor of her Discipline, have so Peculiar a Tendence to inspire.

Your Sentiments in Favour of so Excellent a Constitution, are founded upon Reason; but 'tis your Happiness too, that they descend to you by Inheritance; and that you have been all along confirm'd in them, by Two Powerful and Living Examples. We ought to follow no Precedents against the Light of our own Minds; but 'tis the Glory of a Gentleman, to maintain the Character of his Family, in a just and reasonable Conduct. Did not the Name you derive from your Worthy Father oblige you to such a Conduct, you cannot forget your Relation to that of Wentworth.

Were I not resolv'd to transgress against the Ordinary Rules of Addresses *in this kind, I should represent You in those other Qualifications, which render you so Happy in the Esteem and Love of your Country; A just Return for your Faithful and Constant*

ſtant Application, in all the Capacities you Serve it.

But tho' you will not permit me to purſue this Subject, the Motives to Gratitude from my own particular Obligations; are invincible: I cannot ſtifle, or forget them, while I remember I am a Chriſtian. Next to the Pious Office and Honour you did me at my Baptiſm into the Chriſtian Faith, and the Pureſt Communion of it, I embrace this Publick Occaſion of Thanking you, for the particular Care you took to ſee me Confirm'd in it. Would all Gentlemen conſider their Obligations under the ſame Truſt, there might be Hopes of bringing the People to ſome Senſe of a Duty, which they Engage themſelves in the moſt Solemn Manner to perform. For, after all the Schemes of Reformation, the Examples of Perſons of Diſtinction will moſt effectually recommend Religion to the World. Her Majeſty was ſenſible of this, when She took up that Noble Reſolution, of Honouring none but Perſons of known Principles and Probity, with Her Diſtinguiſhing Favours. The Thoughts of Men are generally ſo taken up with what comes in the way of their Senſes, and ſo little accuſtom'd to Abſtract Reaſoning, that Naked Truth operates but very ſlowly upon them: The Proper way of Inſtructing them, is by ſenſible Arguments; by ſhowing them Virtue alive, and in Motion; and by drawing the Rules of Religion before them, as it were in Colours.

'Tis to be attributed to the Influence of your own, and your Family's Example, in a Conſtant and Devout Attendance on God's Publick Worſhip, that you have the Happineſs to ſee every Lord's-Day, and on

all other Occasions, one of the most Regular and Conformable Congregations that I know, for the Quality of it.

For I speak nothing, Sir, *but upon my Knowledge and Observation. Flattery is a Vice, which almost all* Dedications *disclaim, and are full of: But a Clergyman ought to disclaim his Character, that incurs the Imputation of it. There is nothing more my Aversion; or which I am confident you would be less dispos'd to pardon: And therefore I hope you will believe me, in all Sincerity,*

SIR,

Your most Faithful,

Obedient Servant,

RIC. FIDDES.

SERMON XIV.

A Thankſgiving-SERMON on *Auguſt* the 23d, 1705.

OR,

A Diſcourſe, ſhewing that God, in the Government of the World, acts by Particular Wills.

PSAL. lxv. 7.

Who ſtilleth the Raging of the Sea, the Noiſe of his Waves, and the Madneſs of the People.

THE Principles of *Atheiſm* are given up by all Philoſophers as untenable. And if God made the World, there are Invincible Reaſons, from the Ends of his Making it, to ſhew that he governs it; eſpecially Mankind; who are at once the moſt Needful, and the moſt Noble Objects of his Government.

The Question is, Whether God, in the Course of his Providence, acts only in Pursuance of certain General and Uniform Laws; or by Immediate and Particular Wills?

That he proceeds in the latter Way, both with respect to his Government of the Material and Moral World, I think I have sufficient Reason to determine, from the Authority of the Royal Prophet in these Words: Who, to convince us more effectually of a Special Interposing Providence, instances in Two Acts of it, which of all others are the least accountable for, from any *Phœnomena* of Natural or Moral Causes; and therefore are immediately to be ascrib'd to him, who has all the Powers of Motion, and Hearts of Men in his Hand:

Who stilleth the Raging of the Sea, the Noise of his Waves, and the Madness of the People.

So that the Truth I shall endeavour to establish and confirm from these Words (and what, I doubt not, was the Scope of Holy *David* in them) is this: That God, in the Government of the World, acts by Immediate and Particular Wills.

First, In the Government of Nature, or the Material World. One would think an Argument upon this Principle needless; but a late Specious Hypothesis, which I take to be of ill Consequence to Religion, has engag'd me in it. 'Tis pretended, That God Almighty having form'd a Design of Creating the World; and having at the same time a perfect View of all possible Means of Executing his Design in a Way most worthy of him, would proportion his Work to his Wisdom, and lay down such a simple and uniform Scheme of it, that the Great Machine he was about to erect, should regularly perform all its Motions, without his Interposing every Moment to direct, or vary them; as Mechanicks are forc'd to do with Artificial Movements.

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In Proportion to the Wisdom, the less complicated are the Wills of any Agent 'Tis the Character of Foresight and Penetration, to form and proceed to the Execution of our Designs, without Embarrassing them, and obliging our selves on every Occasion to take New Measures.

Few Persons will entertain any great Opinion of the Prudence of that Man, who builds, or plants; and yet is continually altering the Model of his House, or Garden, and proceeds by no settled Rule or Method in his Contrivance.

And if God, when he had made the World, and establish'd certain Laws of Motion, must yet be conceiv'd at every Turn to interpose in the Regulation of them; what will become of the Wisdom and Perfection of his Nature? Or how shall we reconcile such a Conduct, with the *Idea* of a Being, who at one View takes in all possible Means of effecting his Designs in the most admirable and exquisite Manner? This being the Principle Objection against the Proposition I have laid down, I shall endeavour to confute it; 1. By Exposing the Error; and in Consequence of it, 2. By Considering the Effects of the Fall. And 3. By shewing, that the whole Tenor of the Scriptures is on that Side of the Question I have undertaken to defend.

1*st*. This Objection is fallacious. 'Tis a Sophism, as Logicians term it, of imperfect Enumeration: It proceeds wholly upon a Consideration of the Divine Wisdom in the Creation of the World, without Regard to his other Attributes, or the Ends he had in Creating it. Had there been no Communication of Motions betwixt Bodies and Spirits, or betwixt the Natural and Moral World; the Wisdom of God, abstractedly consider'd, ought perhaps to have settled such a Constant and Uniform Order, as is contended for: So that Matter and Motion being

set

ſet to work, they might have gone regularly on without his Interpoſition. But God having rais'd this Noble Fabrick, not merely for the Manifeſtation of his *Wiſdom* in the Art and Contrivance of it, but of his Goodneſs, and many times his Juſtice too, in adapting the Motions of it to the State and Condition of Free Agents; if theſe Ends cannot be attain'd, without his Interpoſing by Particular Wills; then 'tis no Defect in his Wiſdom to do it. On the other Hand; 'twould rather be a Reproach to his Wiſdom, for the Sake of the *Regularity* of his Work, to loſe the moſt Beneficial and Conſiderable Ends of it.

Now nothing in the World ſeems more obvious, than that a General Law cannot be ſuited to Accidental Emergencies, and Particular Caſes: Or, in other Words, that Brute and Inſenſate Matter, whoſe Motions are ſuppos'd immutably fix'd and determin'd, cannot accommodate it ſelf to the ſeveral Exigencies of Free and Mutable Agents, ſo as to become the Proper Inſtrument of Rewards and Puniſhments to them.

They who are in the contrary Hypotheſis, do in effect confeſs this; when they tell us, that God, upon certain Extraordinary Occaſions may, without Derogating from the Wiſdom of his Conduct, exert a Miraculous and Supernatural Power. Which is a tacit Confeſſion at leaſt, that we ought not to form an *Idea* of the Wiſdom of God, merely from the Simplicity of his Laws, and the Regularity of his Work; but from the Ends and Uſes he propoſes to ſerve by it.

Now the Government and Good of Mankind being the Great Ends of the Divine Oeconomy, and to which all other Laws ought to give place; God may be induc'd, in innumerable Caſes, and in Favour of innumerable particular Perſons, to vary or ſuſpend the General Laws of Motion. A Gene-

ral,

ral, by whom He has some Great Designs of his Providence to serve, is preserved in a surprizing manner; God covers his Head in the Day of Battle, in the Midst of Dangers, and the Instruments of Death; *Tho' a Thousand fall beside him, and Ten thousand at his right Hand.*

A Person of Eminent Parts and Piety, whose Service the Church stands in need of, escapes an Epidemical Infection: He is exempted from the common Malignity of the Pestilence, *that walketh in Darkness, and from the Sickness that destroyeth at Noon-day.*

The Order of Providence, which is God's Principal Design, requires, that such Persons should be distinguish'd in common Dangers and Calamities. But according to the Order of Nature, a Cannon-Ball, or a Pestilential Vapour, neither knows, nor can make any such Distinction. We should therefore, according to the Sense of the wisest Men, and the Histories of all Ages, ascribe such Signal Deliverances to the Special Favour and Protection of Heaven Indeed particular Persons, whatsoever Character they sustain, are only to be sav'd, in General Calamities, by particular Providences.

And herein the Divine Conduct is highly agreeable to the Natural Reason and Practice of Mankind. All Wise Men postpone a Less, to a Greater and more Noble Design. And the Wisdom of God obliges him, for Ends superior to the Order of Nature, to alter or suspend the ordinary Course of it.

If it be said, this will introduce a constant Series of Miracles: I shall not contest much about Words. Miracles are God's Reserv'd Prerogative, which he never makes use of but upon very Extraordinary Occasions, and that without the Concurrence and Subserviency of Second Causes: So that his Action is always visible in them, and particulary design'd to

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be ſo. But in the ordinary Courſe of his Providence, he directs and aſſiſts Nature in a Way more agreeable, and which offers leſs Violence to the viſible Order of it: But we have no leſs Reaſon, as I ſhall make appear afterwards, to believe his Special Interpoſitions, becauſe his Operation in them does not always ſtrike our Senſes. We find in a Thouſand Inſtances, we have a Power our ſelves to ſtop or retard, or haſten the Motion of Bodies, or to alter the Direction of their Motion. Shall we deny this Power to God, who moves them? The beſt Philoſophers being now compell'd to reſolve all Motion into his immediate Impulſe: Or ſhall we deny this Power to thoſe Superior, Miniſterial Agents, God may employ to this End? For what Reaſon?

2*dly*. That God acts by Particular Wills, appears from the Effects of the Fall. The Work of an infinitely Wiſe and Powerful Being, ought (in it ſelf conſider'd) to have no Defects. But the World, as appears from Monſtrous Productions, Abortive Births, and other Diſorders of Nature, is not without them. What ſhall we aſcribe theſe Irregularities to? To the Simplicity of the Laws of Motion? If ſo, they would have happen'd, had not Mankind Sinn'd: And by this means Innocent Perſons had ſuffer'd without their Demerits; which is contrary to Order, and ſome of the moſt clear and diſtinct Ideas we have of the Divine Attributes.

We muſt therefore attribute theſe Evils of Puniſhment to the Poſitive Will of God; and the Curſe, which the Sin of Man provok'd him to inflict on his Works. This Change of the Primitive Order and Inſtitution of Nature, is not only evident from Scripture, but has been obſerv'd by thoſe who underſtood not the Reaſons of it. Philoſophers could not reconcile it with the Honour of the Deity, that he ſhould diſmiſs a Work from his Hands, wherein they

they thought there were such manifest Marks of Imperfection. 'Twas to little Purpose, to ascribe the Disorders of Nature to the Sins of Men, as Natural Effects and Consequences of it: They must have been very hard put to't, to discover the Connection betwixt *Hurricanes* and *Earthquakes*, and the Violent and Irregular Motions of our Appetites. 'Twould puzzle us extremely to shew, that because *Adam* eat of the forbidden Fruit, therefore Beasts immediately withdrew their Subjection, and were dispos'd to feed and prey upon one another. This is to push the Consequences of the Fall too far. 'Tis much more reasonable to impute these Deviations from the first Order of Nature, to the *Mosaick* Account, and the Special Malediction of Heaven. Which, by the way, seems a good Argument, that God does not by a Fix'd and Determinate Law, dispose the Order of Things for the Punishment of Free Agents, before they have actually merited such Punishment. I observe this, because great Pains have been taken to shew, that the Deluge, according to the Establish'd Course of Things, must inevitably have happen'd at the Time, and in the Manner it did: Which supposes, God had laid a Fix'd and Immoveable Scheme for the Destruction of Mankind before he created them, and which they might not have deserv'd. 'Tis true, God Almighty foresees their Demerits; but this does not altogether reconcile a Stated and Predetermin'd Punishment with the Liberty of a Free Agent. A great many Difficulties might be urged against such a Procedure, which 'tis not easy to surmount. 'Tis more human at least, and level to the Apprehensions of Men, to suppose God proceeded in bringing the Deluge, as he did in bringing the Curse upon the Earth; and that was, by an immediate and particular Change of the Order of Nature.

'Tis

'Tis said indeed, and may be urg'd in Favour of the contrary Opinion, that the Effects of the Curse did not take place till the Time of the Deluge; That 'twas the great Fecundity of the Earth, which contributed so much to the Luxury and Corruption of its Inhabitants: As if there were not Temptations enough to sin in a Degenerate World, besides those arising from Ease and Plenty. But this Notion is directly contrary to the *Mosaick* Account of the Fall. It appears from it, that the Execution of the Curse immediately follow'd the Sentence: *When thou tillest the Ground*, says God to *Cain*, *it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her Strength.* Now, tho' we ought not to envy Men the Ingenuity of their Theories and Speculations; yet if we allow God may recede from the Simplicity of his Laws on any Occasion, why not upon so extraordinary an Event, as the Extirpation of the whole Race of Mankind from the Face of the Earth, but One Family, at once.

But whether the Disorders of Nature are to be imputed to the Fall as Moral, or Natural Effects of it; 'tis visible, Things are in a disorderly State. This is the most reasonable Account of the Words of the Apostle; *That the whole Creation groaneth, and travelleth in Pain*, Rom. 8. 22. There is not now that Harmonious Communication of the Motions of Bodies, which was originally establish'd; but Things are very much out of their Natural State and Situation. And indeed, 'twill be hard to assign any tolerable Reason, or End of Providence, in Pestilence, Famine, and Earthquakes, but in Consequence of the Fall. Now upon this Supposition, that Things are in a disorderly State; God may not only very consistently with his Wisdom, but his Goodness seems in a peculiar manner to oblige him to prevent, by Particular Wills, the Effects of these Disorders upon Good Men, and to exempt them from those common

mon Calamities, which were instituted only for the Punishment of Sin.

To this it may be objected, That the Laws whereby the World is govern'd, being Uniform and General, and every way suited to the Dignity of their Author, they must necessarily be attended with unhappy Consequences with respect to particular Men: And 'tis thought no Reflection on the Goodness or Justice of *Human Legislators*, that the Effects of their Laws fall heavy on certain Persons, besides the Intention of them. 'Tis sufficient to answer, That Human Legislators cannot foresee all the particular Grievances of General Laws; if they could, Justice would oblige them to make particular Clauses and Exceptions in Favour of the Persons aggriev'd.

I shall conclude the Argument with Applying this to the Conduct of God; whose Wisdom directs him to make use of the most Simple, General, and Comprehensive Laws; but always in a Way congruous to the rest of his Glorious Attributes, and worthy of him.

I proceed, in the Third Place, to consider the Sense and Authority of the Holy Scriptures in this Argument: Which, indeed, abounds with so many plain and full Proofs of the Truth I am asserting, that there is no possible Answer to be given to them, but by saying they are so many Anthropologies, whereby God Almighty accommodates himself to the common Notions and Apprehensions of Men. Which is an Argument, that this Principle is founded at once in the Natural Sense and Reason of Mankind, and agreeable to the Intention of God in Holy Writ. So that supposing the contrary Hypothesis to be true, I think Philosophers ought to keep it to themselves; those especially, who profess any Veneration for the Divine Oracles, or the Wisdom of God in them.

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The Design of the Holy Scripture is to quicken our Faith, and inflame our Devotion towards God. Who does not perceive these Graces will be most naturally and effectually excited in us, if we believe God acts by Special Interpositions of his Providence, and that he has reserv'd to himself a Power over Second Causes, to regulate or restrain their Influences as he sees fit? If we be firmly establish'd in this Belief, the Reasons of Prayer and Devotion are not only plain and level to our Apprehensions, but the Motives to them irresistible. And perhaps there is no better Account to be given of the General Indevotion of Men, than that they are not fully convinc'd of this important Truth. 'Tis a just and pertinent Remark *Suetonius* makes on the Emperor *Tiberius: Circa Deos & Religiones negligentior erat, quippe addictus Mathematicæ, persuasionisque plenus omnia fato agi.* And indeed, if all Effects come to pass by a fatal and fix'd Chain of Natural Causes, 'twill be hard to evince the Necessity of Prayer to Christians, as a Means of Averting any Evil, or Deriving any Blessing upon them. Nay, upon this Persuasion (which has always been so justly suspected of Irreligion) it seems not only vain, but impious, for a Man under any Mortal Distemper, to pray to God to deliver him from the Effects of it, or to give any Efficacy to the Medicine he takes; seeing in Order to this, God must change the Settled and General Method of his Acting; which is suppos'd inconsistent with his Wisdom, and *repugnant* to his Decrees for him to do; and consequently, inconsistent with that profound Honour and Regard we owe to his Attributes, for us to ask.

'Tis to remove a Principle which so directly tends to Impiety, but which lies at the Bottom of the Hearts of too many Men, that God in Scripture represents himself as doing whatever is done by the Mediation of Second Causes; and as assisting our Prayers, not by any Disposition of Mechanical Laws,

upon

upon the Foresight of them, which is altogether inconceivable, but by Immediate, Executive Acts of his Power. *'Tis the Lord that killeth, and maketh alive; 'tis he that bringeth down to the Grave, and bringeth up*, 1 Sam. 2. *'Tis he that blesseth Men with the Fruits of their Labours and Endeavours in the Field, and in every thing they put their Hand unto*, Deut. 12. 18. *'Tis he that considereth the Poor, and delivereth him in time of Trouble; that preserveth and keepeth him alive, and blesseth him upon the Earth, and delivereth him not into the Hand of his Enemy; that strengthens him upon his Bed of Languishing, and maketh all his Bed in his Sickness*, Psal. 41. 1, 2, 3. In a word, 'Tis he that directs the Order of those Things which are the most casual and fortuitous, and the Disposition whereof seems wholly to depend on the Arbitrary Choice and Wills of Men; as the Casting of Lots, or Drawing them forth: *The Lot is cast into the Lap, but the whole disposing is of the Lord*, Prov. 16. 2. 'Twill be hard to explain these Passages in an intelligible manner; much more to discover the Wisdom and Design of them, but upon the Principle I am maintaining.

If it be said, That in the ordinary Course of Things, we see no Motions communicated to Bodies, but according to the Establish'd Laws of Nature: I answer; God would have Faith in Men to be the Effect of Choice, and not of an Invincible Force upon their Senses. And therefore, tho' we do not see his Action in the Over-ruling Dispensations of his Providence, we have no less Reason to believe it on that Account: Particularly as to his Governing the Operations, and Directing the Influence of those Things, the Springs of whose Motion lie more remote from Human Knowledge and Observation; as of Rain, the Wind, and the Seas: Concerning which, the Providence of God in Scripture is represented more particularly conversant and employ'd, and the greatest Difficulties in Natural Philosophy

propos'd. Thus *Job* 28. 6. *Hast thou entred into the Springs of the Sea? Or hast thou walk'd in the Search of the Depth?* And not only in the Words of my Text, but *Psal.* 89. the *Psalmist* magnifies it as a special Act of the Divine Power and Providence, that he calms the Rage of the Seas, when no Visible (and perhaps, after all the Efforts of Philosophy, no Natural) Cause can be assign'd for their sudden Recess. *O Lord God of Hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee, or thy Faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the Raging of the Seas; when the Waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.* Particularly as to the Wind, our Lord himself has determin'd, that the Motions of it are not to be accounted from any known natural Principle: *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou heareſt the Sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or where it goeth,* *Joh.* 3. 8. The same Difficulties may be observ'd concerning the Clouds and Rain. *Job* puts it as an insuperable one, *Chap.* 36. 29. *Can any understand the Spreading of the Clouds?* Indeed, the best Account Natural Philosophy has given us of this Matter, seems to leave it a Problem still. After all the fine Spherical Bubbles, which are said to compose the Clouds, and the subtle spirituous Matter enclos'd in them, 'twill be hard to demonstrate, that the Air they swim in is not specifically lighter, especially when 'tis much rarify'd. And therefore *Job*, who had doubtless a great Insight into the Secrets of Nature, chose rather to resolve the Suspension of the Clouds in a Medium less gross than themselves, into the immediate Action of God. *He bindeth up the Waters,* says he, *in his thick Clouds; and the Clouds is not rent under them,* Job 26. 8. However this be, we are assur'd, God in a peculiar manner appropriates to himself the Disposition of all the Rain that falls upon the Earth. *Lev.* 26. He promises the *Jews, he will give them Rain in due Season.* Accordingly he tells them by the Prophet, *Joel* 2. 23. *That he hath given them the*

the former Rain moderately, and will cauſe to come down for them Rain, the former Rain, and the latter Rain. On the other Hand, *'tis he that with-holdeth the Showers*, Jer. 3. 3. *And ſhutteth up Heaven that there be no Rain*, 2 Chr. 7. 13. So peculiar is the Prerogative of God in the Diſtribution of the Rain, that the Prophet ſeems to exclude even ſecondary and natural Cauſes from contributing any way towards it. *Are there*, ſays he, *any among the Vanities of the Gentiles*, the Celeſtial Bodies, *that can cauſe Rain?* For ſo he explains himſelf in the next Words; *or can the Heavens give Showers; art thou not he, O Lord God, therefore we will wait on thee?* Jer. 14. 22.

But it is ſaid, if God in the Government of Nature acted by particular Wills, all Events would bear the Character of his Action; he would never do any thing unneceſſary and ſuperfluous, or to no purpoſe: For Inſtance, if he ſhould immediately cauſe the Clouds to Rain, the Water would only fall where 'tis needful to fructify the Earth, or is Commodious to its Inhabitants, but not on Houſes or Highways, or Places where 'tis ſuperfluous. This is no new Objection, 'tis as old as *Job*; *that God ſhould cauſe to rain on the Earth, where no Man is, on the Wilderneſs, wherein there is no Man*, Job 38. 26. But to this we are able to give a ſatisfactory and particular Anſwer: Beſides that we cannot comprehend all the Motives upon which the moſt perfect Being acts, and that 'tis impious to aſſert any Event uſeleſs, becauſe we perceive not all the Ends and Uſes of it; beſides this, I ſay, there are very wiſe and particular Reaſons to ſhew, why God in the Fall of the Rain, and other providential Diſpenſations, does not make ſo viſible and remarkable a Diſtinction as the Objection ſuppoſes requiſite: *Namely*, as I intimated before, that ſuch a conſtant Series of Miracles would be too great a Biaſs on the Liberty of human Actions, deſtroy the Merit of Faith, and be contrary to that ſuperior Or-

der God has eſtabliſh'd for the Government of the moral World; which is to perſuade Men, but not irreſiſtibly to over-rule their Choice: Upon others perhaps ſuch miraculous and extraordinary Methods would have different Effects; they would put philoſophical Heads on forming new Schemes and Theories to account for them, upon mechanical Principles; which ſome atheiſtical Wits have attempted to reſolve Miracles into, notwithſtanding their Infrequency, and Paucity of their Number: But if Miracles were frequent, and came down in Showers of Rain or Hail, they would more apparently loſe their Force and Efficacy, and the Power God hath reſerv'd to himſelf to ſignify his Will and Pleaſure by them in a peculiar manner, for the Confirmation of the Truth, or the Conviction of Infidels, would be render'd Inſignificant. If Men won't be perſuaded by certain miraculous Facts, that happen very rarely, and upon particular Reaſons and Occaſions; there would be leſs Hopes of removing their Prejudices, if ſuch Facts occur'd every Day. They might then have ſome better Pretence to aſcribe them to the Laws of Mechaniſm, or certain unknown Combinations of Matter and Motion; which is at once a very good Argument for God's confirming any Revelation or particular Commiſſion from him by Miracles; and for his ceaſing or diſcontinuing the Power of Miracles, when once ſuch a Confirmation is made. The moſt conſiderable Authority I know of, which is urg'd from Scripture in favour of the contrary Hypotheſis, is that of the *Pſalmiſt*, *Pſ.* 148.6. where God is ſaid to have given natural Bodies ſuch a Law *as ſhall not be broken.* But there is no Difficulty in giving a Solution to theſe Words; they are, as appears from the Context, principally to be underſtood of God's preſerving the celeſtial Bodies, particularly the Sun and Moon in their proper State and Order; but not of his over-ruling their Motions and Influences. To explain

plain the Words in this Senſe would be contrary, (as I hope I have ſufficiently made appear) to the general Current and Deſign of the Scriptures.

I proceed in the ſecond Place to ſhew, that God acts by particular Wills in the Government of the moral World. But this I ſhall not long inſiſt upon: All Pagan, as well as Chriſtian Theology and Religion, ſuppoſe and proceed upon it. The Government of the *Jews*, what is it for ſo many Years but a continu'd Theocracy, wherein God Almighty determin'd the Succeſſion of their Princes, preſided in their Councils, and went forth with their Army? But there was one ſpecial and ſtanding Monument of his Reſidence among them, which I cannot omit obſerving to you, and that was, his protecting them from the Incurſions of their Enemies, when their Males went up, at three ſtated times of the Year, to Worſhip. What was it that reſtrain'd the Enemies of *Iſrael*, when they knew the Nakedneſs of their Land, from making a Deſcent upon it? The Nations that uſed to meet the Armies of the Living God in the Field, decline the Advantage of entring an open, a defenceleſs, and adjoining Country; to what ſhall we impute a Conduct ſo irreconcilable with the ſettled Maxims of human Wiſdom, and Policy? To what? But to the ſpecial Interpoſition of the Supreme Deity, *Who does according to his Will, among the Inhabitants of the Earth*, Dan. 4. 35. *And who boweth when he ſees fit, the Hearts of a whole Nation, or People, as the Heart of one Man*, 2 Sam. 19. 14.

And indeed if God do not over-rule the Inclinations, and Deſigns, and Actions of Men, 'twill be hard to give any tolerable or intelligible Account of ſeveral Texts of Scripture. *Solomon* who ſeems to have deſign'd nothing more, than to eſtabliſh the Belief of a particular Providence, tells us, *that the Preparation of the Heart is of the Lord, and that the Anſwer of the Tongue is of the Lord*, Prov. 6. 1. And Verſe the 3d,

'Tis the Lord that eſtabliſheth the Thoughts. And Verſe the 9th, *A Man's Heart deviſeth his Way, but the Lord directeth his Steps.* And again, *Chap.* 20. 24. *Man's goings are of the Lord*, he directs our Motions to Ends and Events we never thought of, *How then can a Man underſtand his own Way?* 'Twould be as endleſs to cite Human Authors to this Purpoſe. *Cicero*, who underſtood, and ſpoke the Senſe of human Nature, as well as any one of them, lays it down as a general and fundamental Rule; *Sit hoc a principio perſuaſum hominibus, Dominos eſſe omnium rerum, & moderatores Deos, eaq; quæ geruntur, eorum geri ditione, ac numine:* And elſewhere, that without the ſpecial Communications and Influx of Heaven, no Man ever reach'd any extraordinary Excellency, in any kind. *Nemo unquam vir magnus extitit, ſine aliquo Divino numinis afflatu.*

But having inſiſted ſo long upon my former Particular, I ſhall not purſue this Argument, (which I wiſh there were no Occaſion for, any further) but proceed to make ſome ſeaſonable Inferences from it.

And *Firſt*, If God interpoſes by particular Wills, in the Government of Mankind, Princes upon whoſe Adminiſtration the Intereſt of Human Society more immediately depends, muſt be eſteem'd the peculiar Charge of his Providence; not only as to his protecting them from viſible Dangers, and unſeen Accidents and Conſpiracies, which the Annals of all Governments afford us ſignal Inſtances of; but what I more particularly intend here, his inſpiring them with Heroick Motions and Reſolutions, and his directing or infatuating their Counſels as he ſees fit. So the wiſeſt of Princes tells us, That *the King's Heart is in the Hand of the Lord; as the Rivers of Water he turneth it whitherſoever he will*, Prov. 21. 1. And *Chap.* 16. 10. *A Divine Sentence is in the Lips of the King.* Which tho' it be a very bad Argument of the *Romiſh* Doctors

Doctors for the Infallibility of the *Pope*, 'tis an excellent Inſtruction to Princes to purſue the Paths of Virtue and Religion, and implies at leaſt to ſuch as do, a liberal Promiſe of God's inſpiring them in a ſingular manner with the Spirit of Government. Such was that Spirit, which came upon *Saul* when he was Anointed King, which directed *Solomon* in his Determination concerning the true Mother of the Child; and what *David* upon his great Offence, *Pſal.* 51.12. is ſuppos'd to pray for the Reſtitution of.

'Tis to be aſcrib'd to the Conduct of this Spirit, that Her Majeſty had no ſooner aſcended the Throne, but a viſible Succeſs attended Her in all Her Conſultations at Home, and Her Operations Abroad. So that we ſoon obſerv'd a general and happy Turn of Affairs to the Advantage of our Allies, the Mortification of our common Enemy, and the Glory of *England*; theſe were viſible Effects of the Favour of Heaven upon Her Majeſty's Adminiſtration and Arms; being indeed Effects, when we conſider'd the united Powers of *France* and *Spain*, beyond viſible Cauſes, beyond our Hopes, and the Fears of our Enemies; and in one Action particularly, conſider'd in all its Circumſtances, (except thoſe wherein God ſo ſignally fought the Battels of *Iſrael*), beyond Example, tho' it ought not to obſcure the Glory of that gallant Action, whereof we now rejoice.

Let us rejoice in Hope, that the ſame Spirit will preſide in Her Majeſty's Councils of State and War, while She ſits upon the Throne of Her Fathers. If we cannot always penetrate into the Motives of Her Conduct, let us acquieſce in the Submiſſion that is due to thoſe who repreſent the Sovereign Power: Princes may have wiſe Reaſons for the Meaſures they take, tho' thoſe Reaſons do not appear to us. 'Twas never the Character of Churchmen to entertain Jealouſies and Suſpicions, much leſs to foment them, and

give Umbrage to the Government. Tho' one would imagine by the violent and virulent Manner wherewith the Church is so openly insulted, that Churchmen and Fanaticks had chang'd Sides with respect to their Notions of Government, and Principles of Obedience.

This appears particularly from a Libel, call'd, *An Answer to the Memorial of the Church of* England, wherein every Man is represented as an Enemy to the Government, to Her Majesty, and the Protestant Succession, that the Libeller is pleas'd to term a High-Churchman; and every Man is in direct Terms represented a High-Churchman that assents to, or approves the Fifth *Canon* of our Church, that is, (or I am sure ought to be) every Minister of it, that is not guilty of Collusion, and a Prevarication he is asham'd to own: So that by this Account, Her Majesty has not one conscientious Clergyman in the Kingdom, that ought to have the Benefit of Her Protection. Were such a sorry Answer worth the Notice of the Church of *England*, it deserves the same Treatment the Memorial met with.

But I hope we are not to be banter'd out of a Principle the Church has always distinguish'd it self upon; or out of those just Hopes we have of Her Majesty's Designs, for the Benefit and Glory of it. Her known Affection to the Church before Her Accession to the Crown, in times when it was most dangerous to own it, and the Royal Assurances of Favour to it since, are inconteſtable Proofs of the Sincerity of Her Designs. Her Majesty will never forget a Promise, which Her faithful Subjects, and Sons of the Church of *England*, will always think themselves oblig'd to remember.

Secondly, From what hath been said, we have an excellent Argument to support us against the Insults of Popular Fury and Infatuation. God frequently opens

opens the Eyes and turns the Heart of a People in the full Career of their Diſorders; tho' their Recovery indeed is more hopeleſs, when they are under the Impreſſions of a heady and miſtaken Zeal; when they confound the Names and Diſtinctions of Virtue and Vice, *call Evil Good, and Good Evil; put Bitter for Sweet, and Sweet for Bitter.* A Man that thro' Inadvertency, or being agitated with a violent Paſſion, engages in a criminal Action, is in a hopeful way of repenting and correcting himſelf when he comes to conſider; but when we do ill Things under the Notion of doing God and Religion, our Friends and Country good Service, here the Diſeaſe is more latent and difficultly remov'd, as being ſeated both in the Will and Affections, and in an erroneous Judgment: And therefore the great Deceiver of Mankind never puts Men upon ill Deſigns, but he colours them with ſpecious Names, and ſplendid Appearances; and gilds over the Fiend as it were with a Glory.

'Tis wonderful to conſider what great Things have been done by the mere Twang of two or three good Words in the Mouths of Men, whoſe Buſineſs was another thing. Reformation, Liberty and Property, and the Work of the Lord, have been very Serviceable in their Time and in their Way; but they muſt all bow before the grave Cant of Moderation: By Virtue of this Jargon (which 'tis no hard Matter to decipher, but which ſerves well enough to bubble the Populace) Men of truly Chriſtian and Charitable Principles, (by which I underſtand Moderation,) are dreſs'd up in ſo horrid and frightful a Diſguiſe of Violence and Perſecution, that our venerable Mother ſeems almoſt at a Loſs to diſtinguiſh her true and genuine Sons from a ſpurious and foreign Brood. But there is certainly a Medium betwixt a ſneaking and a perſecuting Spirit; and a Criterion to judge of it. Chriſtianity at the ſame time it diſpoſes us to all Of-

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fices of Charity, Meekneſs, and Forbearance, inſpires us with a Spirit of Fortitude, and Greatneſs of Mind. If nothing will content Men, but to make the Virtue of Moderation conſiſt in low and poor Submiſſions, in ſtifling the Sentiments of Honour, and Conſcience, and Gratitude, we ſhall not envy them the Character and Reputation of *moderate* Men: Tho' in the true Notion of this Virtue, there is no Church in the World can put in ſo good a Claim; none of any Age, that in Condeſcention to the Prejudices of Men, ever ſuffer'd its Doctrine and Diſcipline to be ſo openly and publickly affronted, as the Church of *England*. 'Tis an Objection our Adverſaries with all their Artifices cannot get off; that they never diſcover'd an equal Temper towards the Church, when they had Power in their Hands: We have a freſh, but God knows a melancholy Inſtance of this in a neighbouring Kingdom; and the ſame Principles will every where diſpoſe Men to the ſame Practices.

But while the Hearts of Men are in the Hands of God, we have the leſs Reaſon to fear the Effects of Violence, and an intemperate Zeal. The *Pſalmiſt* in the Words of my Text, makes it an Argument of equal Power to calm the Rage of the Seas, and of an infatuated People. But God has more than once remarkably interpos'd in favour of this Church and Nation, to ſtop the Current of popular Diſtractions; and when he ſees good, can do it again.

Thirdly, If God in the Government of the Moral World interpoſe by particular Wills, we ought upon all Occaſions to do our Duty, and to truſt the Event to him: No Exigency of Affairs will juſtify our recourſe to ſinful Meaſures, neither are we to be diverted from appearing in the neceſſary Defence of Truth and Religion, from any Conſideration of Intereſt, or the Iniquity of the Times. 'Tis no wonder corrupt

rupt Statesmen take their Ply from such Considerations; they have done it in all Ages. But the great Scandal to Religion is, when Men who ought to distinguish themselves by their Piety, fall in with such vicious and loose Politicks. We are not to tempt God by dangerous and unnecessary Expedients: But where the Honour and Interest of Religion, or the Prevention of scandalous Arts and Practices, require proper Measures, there lies an Obligation upon us to them: And while we act conscientiously, we have a much surer Anchor of Hope in the Divine Providence, than in the trickish Arts and Subterfuges of the most cunning Men. Corrupt Politicks may succeed for a time, but pure and undefiled Religion is a safe and stable Foundation to build our Hopes of Peace and Prosperity upon: Tho' were this a false Maxim, no Objection against acting upon a Principle of Conscience, is of any Weight to a Christian. Were it a good Plea, that the Times, or other secular Views, will not bear a faithful Discharge of our Duty, Christianity had been stifled in its Infancy; and if it do not still raise us above such low Regards, we had better be silent, as to the Power and Efficacy of it.

There was no Person condescended more to the Prejudices of the Times, and the Impressions of a misguided Zeal, than the great Apostle St. *Paul*; yet he was so far from thinking it a Toleration to convenient Compliances, that the Times would come wherein Men would not bear sound Doctrine, 2 *Tim.* 4. 3. That for this very Reason he charges *Timothy* in the most awful and solemn manner, *before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, that he preach the Word, that he be instant in Season and out of Season:* Whatever Difficulties or Opposition he might meet with, *that he reprove, rebuke, exhort.* There is a Season for bearing with Men in their Errors in indifferent Things, and while they act upon the Principle of a well-meaning, tho' erroneous

neous Conſcience; but there is no Seaſon for Hypocriſy and Prophaneneſs, or for the Violation of the moſt ſacred Inſtitutions of Religion, and Religious Teſts, or for tolerating Men in them: If it be our Duty at all times to rebuke ſuch Offences, no time can be inexpedient for Authority to reſtrain them.

'Tis very hard, that worthy Members of our *Church*, for acting conformably to this *Apoſtolical* Charge, are repreſented under abuſive Characters, and invidious Names of Diſtinction. Not that there is, we hope, any ſuch Grounds for the Diſtinction, as our Adverſaries would have us think, and pleaſe themſelves with the Thoughts of; the Buſineſs of the diſcriminating Names, contriv'd by ill Men to create Miſunderſtandings among us, is to point out thoſe who were for or againſt a Law, which generally was acknowledg'd reaſonable on both Sides; the main Objection lay againſt ſome particular Hardſhips of it. Others thought Indulgence to the Diſſenters the only means to mollify them, and bring them to a Temper of Conſideration; of which we have ſeen no great Effects, where we ſeem'd to have had the beſt Expectations of that Kind. We ought not however to conclude from either of theſe Reaſons, that all thoſe who went upon them had Deſigns to the Prejudice of the Church; nothing can be more unjuſt, than ſuch an Imputation: Perſons may have the ſame Ends, tho' they cannot agree about the Means of coming at them. If there be any that deſire to go into the Diſtinction of Low-Church, upon ill Deſigns of reducing the Church to a Level, in favour of a Faction, or to ſhow their Gratitude to it, or out of an Inclination to embroil themſelves, we hope they are inconſiderable for their Number; the Church does not ſtand in need of Men of turbulent Spirits. Juſt Reaſoning is a much better Qualification for Her Service, than Noiſe and Harangue. But as to the

the main Body of our Clergy and Laity, we presume they have their Eyes open; and are Both so Wise and Conscientious as not to be imposed upon, and alienated in their Tempers and Affections, by a Sett of unhappy equivocal Distinctions, contriv'd on purpose to foment Enmity and Division among them.

I shall conclude all with the Excellent Collect of our Church. *O Lord we beseech thee, let thy continual Pity cleanse and defend thy Church; and because it cannot continue in Safety without thy Succour, preserve it evermore by thy Help and Goodness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.* Amen.

TO

TO

Walter Strickland, *Esq*;

SIR,

I Shall make no Apology for Publishing a Sermon you were pleas'd to judge favourably of. My Design in it, is to recommend the Practice of Religion, upon a Principle which irresistibly persuades those, who Believe and Consider it with Attention.

You will observe, I have taken several Hints from what has pass'd between us in private Conversation; wherein I have with great Satisfaction heard you expose the Folly of Atheism, *and assert the* Fundamental Truths of Religion, *upon Reasons that were Just and Solid.*

'Twould be your Glory, Sir, *always to employ those admirable Talents God has given you, to the same excellent Ends.*

The starting of nice and intricate Objections against Religion, tho' only out of Curiosity, or for Argument-sake, is of dangerous Consequence to it; especially in Men of Parts, and of a lively Imagination. The Beautiful and Surprizing Turns of their Thoughts dazzle and confound weak Minds, and

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gain their Assent before they know what it is they assent to. All Men are not capable of Reasoning strictly, or carrying a long Train of Proofs; but a Brisk Stricture of Fancy, *a* Witty Allusion, *a* Smart Reflection, *have a strange Power of Imposing almost upon every Body: It requires a great Strength of Mind to Judge well of what pleases us very much.*

I observe this, Sir, *to show you the Particular Engagements you are under, on all Occasions to Espouse the Cause and Interests of Religion. You, who are so happy in the Vivacity of your Thoughts, the Facility of Expressing them, and an Engaging Air of Address.*

These are Advantages which would more effectually recommend Religion to the World, than Cursory Discourses from the Pulpit; which are look'd upon as mere Amusements, that our Office obliges us to; and are frequently read with no other Design, but to know how the Preacher *comes off.*

As to that, I shall not much concern my self: If what I here present you with have but the desir'd Effect, and tend in any Measure to promote a Sense of Religion, and persuade us to the Practice of it. For there is, Sir, *there certainly is such a future State, as I have endeavour'd to evince the Belief of: And if there be, the Consequence is clear and undeniable, that this is the One Thing necessary for us to concern our selves about.*

Not that I think Religion inconsistent with the reasonable Enjoyments and Pleasures of Life. The Fanaticks indeed of our Saviour's Time, the Pharisees, *affected to distinguish themselves by a Singu-*

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larity of Behaviour, and a ſullen Reſervedneſs of Temper: And we want not Inſtances of Modern Zealots, who, by making Ill-Nature *and* Ill-Manners *the Principal Teſt of their Piety, have occaſion'd a too General (tho' very groundleſs) Prejudice againſt Religion, as if it tended to deprave and embitter the Spirits of Men, and render them unfit for Free and Generous Converſation.*

But our Lord *has left us another* Example. *His* Temper *was Eaſy and Cheerful, Affable and Obliging. He thought it not below the Dignity of his Perſon and Character, when Opportunities offer'd, to converſe with the greateſt of Sinners; and the firſt Miracle he wrought, was upon a Publick Occaſion of Feſtivity and Mirth.*

We may be Good Chriſtians, *without being* Cynicks; *ſo we do but take care to keep within the Bounds of Decency and Sobriety, and remember that there are Proper Seaſons alſo for Recollection and Retirement, for Calling our own Ways to Remembrance, and Judging our ſelves here, that when God comes to Judgment we may find Mercy.*

For that he will come, I hope I have ſufficiently made appear from the Principles of Natural Reaſon: *And it had been eaſy for me to have multiply'd Citations from the beſt Authorities; particularly* Cicero's, *who was equally happy in the Juſtneſs of his Thought, and the Beauty of his Language. Your Two Celebrated* Poets, *and the* Greateſt Wits *in the World in their different Characters,* Virgil *and* Ovid, *are entirely in the Sentiments of the* Roman Orator. *As to your Friend* Horace, *whom you ſo juſtly admire for the Inimitable Delicacy of his Expreſſion,*

I had rather be silent. Some Interpreters from that Passage.

Non omnis moriar, multaq; pars mei
Vitabit Libitinam, *Lib.* 3. *Ode* 30.

would conclude that Horace *believ'd the Soul immortal. But others with greater Ingenuity suppose, that he designs nothing more by these Words, than a Compliment to himself upon the Immortality of his* Poems. *'Tis better to say nothing, than to go about to support Truth by weak Reasons, or upon false and suspicious Evidence, which there is no Occasion for.*

But, Sir, *I had another invincible Motive to the Publication of this Sermon: A Sense of Gratitude for the late very great and signal Obligation you were pleas'd to confer on me, without my* Solliciting *it, without so much as my* Knowledge, *and while I was under* Misfortunes. *Generosity is the Character of your Family: But these are such uncommon and extraordinary Circumstances of a generous Action, that I do not know whether I ought to be more thankful for the Honour you did me, or your Manner of doing it. And yet,* Sir, *after such a noble Instance of your* Kindness *and* Condescension, *'twas a little hard I could not obtain to pay you my publick Acknowledgments for it. But I must beg your Excuse for exceeding my Commission not only upon this, but upon all other Occasions I shall have of professing my self,*

SIR,

Your most Faithful,

and Humble Servant,

RIC. FIDDES.

SERMON XV.

The Proofs, and Influence, of a Future JUDGMENT.

ACTS xxiv. 25.

And as he reaſoned of Righteouſneſs, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled.

THE Law of Religion is the Law of Order and Convenience; and tho' it chiefly deſign our Future Happineſs in another Life, is admirably accommodated to our preſent State and Condition in this. So that ſetting aſide the Conſideration of a Judgment to come, and the Rewards and Puniſhments conſequent upon it, 'tis every Man's Concern that truly conſults his Intereſt, his Reputation, or Pleaſure, to *practiſe* the Duties of Righteouſneſs and Temperance, and to live within the Bounds of Moral Virtue and Honeſty.

There are indeed particular Caſes, wherein our Duty may interfere with our *Intereſt*. It ſometimes happens, that a Man for the preſent finds his Account more in a Knaviſh, than an Honeſt Practice:

But wise Men do not take their Measures, or form General Rules from Particular Accidents, but from the most probable and common Event of Things. And generally speaking, I do not doubt but the Advantages even of Temporal Prosperity and Success, will be found on the Side of Honesty and a good Conscience.

With Respect to our *Reputation*, a Sober and Religious, is certainly the most prudent Conduct. Hypocrisy it self does Religion this Service, that it shows Vice is not very reputable, even in the Opinion of those who give themselves up to it. 'Tis an uneasy Thing to be always acting a Part; and no Man would put himself to the continual Trouble of Dissembling those Vices which do not affect him in Point of Interest, were it not for the Scandal of them. There is an innate Turpitude in all sinful Actions, which no Sinner can wholly stifle the Sense of, that has any Regard to the Dignity of Human Nature: But Virtue shines with a genuine Lustre and Beauty, which those very Libertines, whose Hearts are not captivated with it, cannot but esteem and admire; so that there are few Persons so Vicious, but they entertain a secret Veneration for Good Morals, (which is only another Expression for Good Manners) and for those that practise them. Hence it is that Vice can effect nothing, but when it assumes the Name, or dresses it self up in the Habit of Virtue. Most Men are so sensible of this, that they endeavour to keep their Sins as private as they can. Accordingly, the Scriptures represent the Wickedness of Men by the Works of Darkness; and suppose it the Highest Aggravation of the *Folly and Stupidity of Sinners, when they make a mock at Sin, and glory in their Shame*, Prov. 14. 9. Phil. 3. 19.

Religion contributes no less visibly to all the Reasonable *Pleasures* and Delights of Human Life; not only from the Influence it has upon the Ease, and Peace,

Peace, and Freedom of our Minds; but as it naturally tends to preſerve the Body in a firm State of Health, and to keep up the Vigor and Gaiety of the Spirits: In both which Reſpects, it evidently gives a higher and more grateful Reliſh to all our Enjoyments. Upon which Account, the great Apoſtle of *Atheiſm* and Impiety, *Epicurus* himſelf, was forc'd to confeſs, that the true, ſolid, and ſubſtantial Pleaſures of Human Life, conſiſted in the Exerciſe of Moral Virtue and Honeſty. This was the Principle of one, who deny'd the Providence of God, and a future Account to be given of the Actions of Men; of *One*, who had no Views beyond this World, and who employ'd all his Wit and Philoſophy in the *Theory* of Pleaſure, and in finding out what contributed moſt to a Life of Luxury and Senſual Gratifications.

And indeed, his * Sentiments concerning Moral Virtue, are founded in the immutable Order and Nature of Things: For Reaſon being the Law of Human Nature, whenever we follow the Dictates of it, we are in our natural and proper State, doing that which we were made and deſign'd to do. Now all natural Actions are eaſy, ſweet, and pleaſant; and cannot indeed be otherwiſe, without Reproaching at once the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of the Author of Nature. 'Tis a great Miſtake therefore to think that Religion is inconſiſtent with any of the Moderate and Reaſonable Enjoyments of Human Life: And if Men will contend for ſuch Diſorders as are unreaſonable, they muſt argue by themſelves, for there is no Reaſoning with them.

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* *For ſo* Cicero, Lib. 2. de Finibus, *repreſents it as a Maxim of his*; Non poſſe jucundè vivi, niſi ſapienter, ſobriè juſteque vivatur.

But tho' almoſt all Sinners are convinc'd of the Reaſonableneſs of Religion, and the general Tendency it has to promote all the Intereſts and Deſigns of this Life; yet few Perſons, thro' a ſtrange Infatuation of their Minds, or by reaſon of the Corruption of their Hearts, are prevail'd upon by theſe Motives *to embrace a Religious Life*. They are *the Terrors of the Lord* which, after all, moſt effectually *perſuade Men*; and whereby perhaps the beſt of Men, in Caſes of great and violent Temptations, find themſelves moſt irreſiſtibly penetrated. But there is no Conſideration apt to ſtrike a greater Awe and Terror into the Minds of Men, than that of *a Judgment to come*: If any thing be forcible enough to ſtop the Career of our criminal Paſſions and Inclinations, to reſtrain us from an Unrighteous and Intemperate Courſe of Life, from *Walking after the ways of our Heart, and the ſight of our Eyes*; it muſt be a firm Perſuaſion, *that for all theſe Things God will bring us to Judgment.*

And therefore, tho' no Queſtion *Felix* was ſenſibly affected with the Apoſtle's Diſcourſe of Righteouſneſs and Temperance, and fully convinc'd of the Folly and Scandal of the contrary Vices he was ſo notoriouſly guilty of; having * marry'd *Druſilla*, another Man's Wife; and committing much Cruelty and Injuſtice in the Adminiſtration of his Government: Yet that which is generally ſuppos'd to have made ſo viſible and powerful an Impreſſion upon him, was, the Apoſtle's Backing his other Arguments and Motives to Religion, with the Conſideration of *a Judgment to come.*

And as he reaſon'd, &c.

So that my Deſign from theſe Words, is,

* Tacit. Annal. *Lib.* 12.

Firſt,

First, To evince the Truth of this Fundamental Principle, that there is *a Judgment to come.*

And *Secondly*, To shew, that the main Influence Religion has upon the Minds of Men, proceeds from the Belief of it.

And *First*, I shall endeavour to evince the Truth of this Fundamental Principle, from the Three following Particulars.

1*st*. From a Consideration of those natural Notions and Expectations of it, wherewith the Generality of Mankind are possess'd.

2*dly*. From a Consideration of the Wisdom and Goodness of God:

And 3*dly*. Of his Justice.

1*st*. From a Consideration of those natural Notions and Expectations of it, wherewith the Generality of Mankind are possess'd.

If we do but reflect upon what passes within us, we experience a certain Consciousness, which bears witness to all our Actions, whether Good or Evil, and acquits or condemns us accordingly. Every Man whose Heart is not altogether corrupt, or whom the Spirit of God has not given over, is sensible of this.

Upon the Discharge of our Duty, and a good Conscience, our Thoughts are naturally easy, and fill'd with Joyful Eulogies and Reports. But upon the Commission of any notorious Sin, our guilty Minds are ever and anon haunted and pursu'd with the Terrors of an unseen Vengeance: Dismal Apprehensions and Distractions of Thought break in upon us, and the Fears of Hell, and a

Judgment to come, are very troubleſome and diſquieting to us.

And theſe Fears are incident to the moſt powerful, and proſperous, and ſecret Sinners. Thoſe who are in a Condition to give Laws to others, or to bribe off and eſcape all Witneſſes from without, yet cannot avoid the inward Challenges and Rebukes of their own Minds.

They may perhaps, in the Hurry and Purſuit of Buſineſs, or while they are taken up with ſome vain and impertinent Amuſements, divert their Thoughts from theſe troubleſome Reflections; but whenever they are cool, and at Leiſure to recollect themſelves, (and there is no Sinner, but has now and then his Sober Intervals) theſe Ghaſtly Fiends will return upon them, and follow them into all their Solitudes and Retirements.

But now, if there be no Life after this, or no future Account to be given of our Actions; why do we trouble and diſquiet our ſelves with theſe Fears and Apprehenſions, ariſing from the Senſe of a future Judgment? Whence do they proceed? Or what can be the Reaſon of them? Can we imagine God has implanted theſe Natural Apprehenſions in us, merely with a Deſign to delude and impoſe upon us? Is it conſiſtent with the Perfections of his Nature, that he ſhould ſo univerſally miſlead Mankind, and overrule them into a Belief of what there is no Solid Reaſon or Foundation for?

In Anſwer to this, the Libertine ſays, That theſe Fears we ſpeak of, are not natural, but the Effect of Prejudice and Education: 'Tis early inſtill'd into our Minds, that there is a Terrible and Almighty Judge, who ſits at the Helm of Affairs, with a Rod of Vengeance in his Hand, and who will not ſuffer the Sinner to eſcape with Impunity. 'Tis thro' this Prepoſſeſſion, that we are miſled into the

Belief

Belief of a future State. The Nurſe tells the Child ſtrange Stories of Spectres and Apparitions; and the Prieſt afterwards of Hell, and the Devil: And ſo 'tis not God Almighty; but *the Nurſe, the Prieſt, and the Child, that impoſe upon the Man.*

But to this I anſwer; If theſe Apprehenſions which ariſe in our Minds concerning a future Judgment be all a Jeſt, and owing to the Prejudice of Education; why cannot Men free themſelves from this Prejudice, by the Uſe and Exerciſe of their Reaſon; eſpecially thoſe Men, who pretend to diſcover the Cheat and Unreaſonableneſs of it?

In other Caſes Men frequently efface the Impreſſions of Education, and correct thoſe Errors they have been train'd up in from their Infancy, and confirm'd in by all the ſubtle Arts and Methods of *Prieſtcraft:* But how many have we heard of, who have been able wholly to diſcard the Belief of a future Judgment? Tho' there have been Perſons, who have taken upon them to diſabuſe the World in ſo Important an Affair, yet were they never able to gain any Number of Proſelytes, or to reaſon others, I may add, themſelves, out of a Perſuaſion eſtabliſh'd by the General Senſe of Mankind. Nay, ſome of them (and we want not modern Inſtances of this Kind) who have ſet up for the greateſt Patrons of Atheiſm, being ſtartled by ſome Extraordinary Providence or Danger, have given up the Cauſe of it, and felt thoſe Inward Convictions, which they could not ſtifle or diſſemble, *Caligula*, though he laugh'd at the Gods, yet when they thunder'd, expreſs'd an Unmanly Fear, and was glad to ſneak any where out of the way. And perhaps a Flaſh of Lightning, or a good Clap of Thunder, ſtill is ſufficient to awaken the greateſt Libertine into a Senſe of what he pretends to believe nothing of.

If there have been ſome particular Inſtances of Men who have dy'd *Hard* and *Impenitent*, this is no Objection againſt what we aſſert of the natural Notions and Apprehenſions of Men concerning a future State. In other Caſes, we do not judge of the Nature of Things from uncommon and particular Defects. Becauſe ſome Men are born blind, 'twould be ridiculous to conclude, that Men have not naturally the Benefit and Uſe of their Eyes. As irrational would it be to conclude, in the preſent Argument, againſt the General and Natural Senſe of Mankind; becauſe ſome Men are ſo infatuated by their Prejudices, or their Paſſions, that they do not ſee Things in a true Light; or, becauſe, after their numerous and repeated Provocations, God has at laſt given them up to a Judicial Blindneſs of Mind, and Hardneſs of Heart.

Is it not much more reaſonable to believe, that a future Judgment, being agreed upon by the Beſt, and Wiſeſt, and Greateſt Part of Mankind in all Ages, is one Fundamental Article of Religion; and that therefore the Inward Teſtimony of our own Minds concerning it, is the Voice and Language of Nature, underſtood by all Mankind; the Weak and the Wiſe, the Illiterate and the Learn'd, indifferently aſſenting to the Evidence of it?

But *2dly*. As Wicked Men are poſſeſs'd with theſe Fears and Anticipations of a future State of Puniſhment, ſo God Almighty has implanted in the Minds of good Men, natural Hopes and Expectations of a future Happineſs and Reward. And this Conſideration has had ſo great an Influence on the Minds of Men, that they have made it their Choice, rather to ſuffer the greateſt of Miſeries and Calamities of this Life which human Nature is capable of Suffering, than to be guilty of a mean and diſhonourable Action.

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I cannot think all those noble heroick Instances, of the *Roman* Bravery in particular, proceeded merely from a Principle of Knight-Errantry and Vain-glory: That Men should voluntarily sacrifice their dearest Interests, their Lives and Children, and freely undergo the most exquisite Torments the Wit or Malice of their Enemies could invent; these, I say, were Actions which must have had some higher Motive, than merely to be talk'd of. There is no Probability, that Men who believe their Souls mortal, should devote themselves to voluntary Sufferings and Death, merely to immortalize their Names. Accordingly * *Cicero*, who understood Human Nature, and the Springs of Human Action so well, makes the Thirst of Glory, and the desire of perpetuating our Memory by such memorable Deeds, a secret Intimation and Proof of the Soul's Immortality.

'Twas upon this Prospect *Socrates* supported himself so well under his Sufferings, and resign'd up his Breath in that Saying; *If there be a Life after this, I have a Title to Happiness; but if none, I cannot be miserable.* Which he said, not so much out of a Distrust of the thing, as supposing it were really a Question, yet the Belief of it is infinitely the surer and the safer Side, on which every wise Man ought to determine himself.

Which very well agrees with those Words of † *Cicero*, *If*, says he, *I err in believing the Soul's Immortality, I err willingly; neither while I live will I suffer this happy Delusion, if it be one, to be wrested from me; but if when*

* *Pro Archia Poeta, sub finem, 1. Tusc.* Nemo unquam sine magnâ spe immortalitatis se pro patriâ offert ad mortem.

And again, Quum optimus quisq; maxime posteritati serviat, esse aliquid verisimile est cujus is post mortem sensum sit habiturus.

† Quod si in hoc erro, quod animos hominum immortales esse credam, libenter erro, nec mihi hunc errorem quo delector, &c.

I dye,

I dye, I shall be void of all Sense, as some vulgar Philosophers think, my Error also will die with me, and I shall not be ridicul'd by the Dead.

Both these great Men suppose here, only as probable, what was their firm and settled Persuasion; but even upon this Supposition 'tis the highest Madness in any Man, to disclaim his Title to Happiness, and adventure to be damn'd, upon a bare *may be*, that there is no future State of Rewards or Punishments.

For if a good Man die, the worst that can befal him, is, his Conscience will die with him; and there is an end put to a Life, which has little to recommend it, but the Hopes and Expectations of another. But on the other Hand, if there be, as most certainly there is, such a future State, what Confusion will the Unbeliever find himself in, when it is too late to retrieve his Error; when there is no After-Game to be play'd; no further Overtures of Mercy or Conditions of Pardon, but Judgment is ready to be pass'd, and he has nothing to plead in Bar against it?

It must be own'd indeed, that the main Evidence we have of a future Judgment and State; (* for I all along indifferently use Two Terms, which have so necessary a Connection and Dependance upon one another, even in the Opinion of those, who have endeavour'd to undermine the Foundations of them both;) the main Evidence of them, I say, is from the Scriptures; which therefore tell us; *That Christ brought Life and Immortality to Light through the Gospel*, 2 *Tim.* 1. 10. From whence we must at least conclude, that the Gospel has given us a more full and express Assurance of a future State, than was ever be-

* *Letters to* Serena, p. 40. *Heaven and Hell depend upon the Immortality of the Soul.*

fore

fore made known so certainly to the World, either by Reason or Revelation.

Yet it cannot be deny'd that the Generality of Mankind, were all along under very lively Notions and Apprehensions concerning it. The whole Pagan Theology is an inconteſtable Proof of this; and ſetting aſide ſome few *Epicureans* among the *Greeks*, *Pliny* the Elder, and two or three looſe vicious Poets among the *Romans*, the Hiſtory of the Soul's Immortality might be deduc'd in a continu'd Current from the beſt and moſt celebrated Writers of the Ancients. Nay, two of the greateſt * Men among the *Romans* make this univerſal Conſent of Mankind, eſpecially of the beſt and wiſeſt of Men, in the Belief of a future State, a convincing Argument for it.

From all which, I ſhall draw this Concluſion, that had we no expreſs Revelation of a future State of Rewards and Puniſhments, it ſeems very reaſonable to believe it, from a Conſideration of thoſe natural Notions and Expectations of it, wherewith the Generality of Mankind are poſſeſs'd.

2*dly*, From a Conſideration of the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs. God has created Man with a Deſign to make him happy; a Deſign worth the *Idea* we have of him, and the Perfections of his Nature: 'Twere perhaps better with the Atheiſt to ſay, That Man is the Product of blind and ſenſeleſs Chance, than with ſome Chriſtians, that God without Reſpect to the Sins or Demerits of Men, and even Antecedently to his Decree of creating them, deſtin'd

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* *Cicero.* Nec me ſolum ratio ac diſputatio impulitur it a crederem ſed Nobilitas etiam ſummorum Philoſophorum & Authoritas, *De Senec.* *Seneca.* Cum de animarum immortalitate loquimur, non leve apud nos habet conſenſus hominum. Utor hac perſuaſione publica. *Ep.*

the

the far greateſt Part of them to eternal Flames and Miſery: This is to repreſent the Deity not under the Notion of a kind and loving Father, but of a ſtern and dreadful Tyrant.

And as God has created Man to be happy, he has impreſs'd on him a continual and invincible Deſire of Happineſs. We can love, we can unite our ſelves to nothing but to real or apparent Good; when we are betray'd into Sin, when we procure our own Death and Deſtruction, we act in Purſuance (tho' upon a miſtaken Application) of this Principle: 'Tis impoſſible we ſhould do otherwiſe; the Love of Happineſs is irreſiſtible.

Now, if God has made Man to be happy, if he has inſpir'd him with an invincible Deſire after a State of Happineſs, how ſhall we reconcile it with the Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs, if ſuch a State can no where be found? Yet ſo it is, that if there be no other World wherein it is attainable, there are no Hopes of attaining it in this.

For this World is nothing but a Theatre of Miſery and Trouble, of Folly and Diſorders, of uncertain Changes and Turns of Fortune; it can neither afford us any ſolid and ſubſtantial Happineſs, nor ſecure the Continuance of it unto us. To ſeek for Happineſs here, is to ſeek for *the Living among the Dead.* The Depth (the whole Extent of the material World) ſays it is not in me: *The Eye*, the nobleſt and moſt extenſive of all the Senſes, *is not ſatisfied with Seeing*; nay, the Uſe of it is many times dangerous; one indiſcreet Look is enough to deſtroy us; and we ought on ſeveral Occaſions, if we conſult our Happineſs, to ſhut our Eyes. I might obſerve how unſatisfactory the Entertainments of the other Senſes are, and what Errors and Diſorders they frequently betray us into, eſpecially when we indulge them the moſt: We cannot have a better Authority in the Caſe, than that of *Solomon*; he had rang'd all the

the Fields of ſenſual Pleaſure and Delight; he had Power and Wealth to command whatever he had a mind to; and he ſeems to have given himſelf up to ſo great Exceſs, with a particular Deſign, that he might be able to determine, from his own experimental Knowledge, how far the greateſt Luxury, in Conjunction with the greateſt Fortune, could contribute to the great Happineſs of Man. For, *what can the Man do*, ſays he, *that cometh after the King?* Eccl. 2. 12. Who is ſo competent a Judge in this Argument as my ſelf, who by the Splendor and Superiority of my Condition could command all the *Delights of the Sons of Men, and with-held not my Heart from any of them?* Yet upon a particular and deliberate Review of his Actions, he writes at the Foot of the Account, *Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.*

But the Supreme Happineſs of Man is that of his ſuperior and more excellent Part, his Soul. And if we enquire what Advances we can make towards the Perfection of our Minds in this Life, ſhall we ſucceed much better? To ſay nothing of the Depravation of our Wills, and after what an imperfect manner our Hearts and Affections are united to God, the True, the Only, the Eternal Source and Fountain of Happineſs; let us but a little conſider how ſhort the Compaſs, and how many the Errors of our Underſtanding are. A Pile of Graſs, or the Stones we tread upon, are ſufficient to humble and confound all the Philoſophers in the World. The little Progreſs we can make in ſeveral Parts of uſeful Knowledge, ſerves only to diſcover our Ignorance, and to open to us a wider Proſpect of foreign and unknown Objects. Now, what Light is to the Senſible, the ſame is Knowledge to the Intellectual Eye; the Joy and Refreſhment of it, the proper *Pabulum* on which it delights to feed. And yet this brighteſt Jewel and Ornament of human Nature is ſo rough caſt, ſo difficult to come at, and ſo full of Flaws and Imperfe-

ctions,

ctions, that the wiſeſt of the Heathens, in the Opinion of the Oracle, frankly confeſs'd he knew nothing: And the wiſeſt of Men, in the Judgment of Heaven, has left us this Aphoriſm, *That he which increaſeth Knowledge, increaſeth Sorrow*, Prov. 1. 18. Which I cannot render better, than in the Words of a very Learned † Biſhop of our Church? "*Though Knowledge be the moſt excellent of all* earthly Goods; being "the Ornament of the Mind, which is the beſt Part "of us; yet this alſo is ſufficient for our Happineſs; "becauſe after it hath coſt a Man infinite Pains, "and ſometimes exhauſted his Spirits, and made "him melancholy and moroſe, nay thrown him into "many Diſeaſes, to acquire that little Wiſdom he "can attain, which raiſes alſo more Doubts than it "can reſolve, and meets with troubleſome Oppoſition, from various Opinions that claſh againſt "it: It cannot but fill him with Indignation, to "find Folly generally more applauded than his Wiſdom, and grieve his very Soul, to ſee that it is "dangerous for a Man to know more than his Neighbours; and that he is ſo far from being able to remedy what is amiſs, that he is hated if he endeavour it, and rewarded with Reproaches, for his "Care of the Publick Good.

And can we imagine God Almighty has deſigned ſuch a World as this, for the Scene of our Happineſs, wherein the Improvement of our nobleſt Faculties tends only to ſhow us our Defects, and many times to betray us into Inconveniences? Has he inſpir'd Men with ſuch an impatient Deſire of Knowledge, in order to put them firſt upon tedious and difficult Reſearches after it, and when they have gain'd a ſmall Smattering of it, then to expoſe them to ill uſage for their Pains? Is it congruous to the Wiſ-

† Bp. *Patrick*, in locum.

dom

dom and Goodneſs of God, that he ſhould endow Mankind with ſo general and invincible Inclinations, for which he has provided no ſuitable Entertainment; that he ſhould excite certain Paſſions in us, only with a deſign to deny us the Pleaſures of their Gratifications: Or ſhall we ſuppoſe, Man the moſt noble and excellent Part of the viſible Creation, the leaſt capable of all other Creatures of attaining his End?

So indeed the † Philoſopher thought, and made it an Article of Impeachment againſt Nature, that whereas ſhe had granted to certain Beaſts and Birds, whoſe Life is of no great Significancy, a Term of many Revolutions of Years; Man has but a Leaſe of a very ſhort Duration, for the Improvement of his Knowledge, and thoſe intellectual Attainments, wherein his Happineſs conſiſts.

But there is no Difficulty in the Objection, if we believe, that as God has made intelligent Beings, there is another Life, wherein he has abundantly provided agreeable Entertainment for all our intellectual Powers and Appetites; which the nobleſt Faculties of human Nature, our Underſtanding and Will, may eternally feed and center themſelves upon.

This is what Reaſon, when we conſult the Idea of an All-wiſe and good God, dictates, and Revelation confirms to us: For ſo we are told, that whereas we ſee only *as through a Glaſs darkly*, we ſhall then ſee God *Face to Face*; *now we know only in Part, but then we ſhall know Him, even as we are known.* Our Minds will be united to him in perfect Viſion, and be continually enlightned with the glorious Communication of the Beauty and Perfections of his Nature: Our Sight and Knowledge of him will be clear and diſtinct; *we ſhall ſee him as He is.* The Mind is here in

† Theophraſtus.

a barren Wilderneſs, wherein there is no Spring to quench or ſatisfy its Thirſt: But then we ſhall freely drink at thoſe Rivers of Pleaſure which Water the City of God, and flow for evermore: Then we ſhall feed on Angels Food, the Beams an Invigorations of Divine Light and Glory: Then we ſhall freely Philoſophize, and know all Things worthy to be known; without the Difficulty of Study, or the Danger of Error. This is what *Solomon* elegantly repreſents to us, when he tells us of *Wiſdom*'s *Killing her Beaſts, and furniſhing her Table, and inviting Men to eat of her Bread, and to drink of the Wine ſhe has mingled.* And if the Queen of the *South* thought the Servants of this Prince ſo happy in Standing before him, and Hearing his Wiſdom; how infinitely more happy ſhall we be, in having the Treaſures of Divine Wiſdom continually open'd to us! When we ſhall underſtand all Myſteries, and all Knowledge, and ſee the moſt Perfect and Glorious Objects in the moſt Perfect Manner. How ſhall we then cry out with Her, that *Half of theſe Things have not been told us; and that they far exceed the Fame and Report we have heard of them?* Prov. 9. 6. 2 Cron. 9. 7.

Theſe are Rewards, worthy of God to beſtow on thoſe who are prepar'd for them; on thoſe whom his Goodneſs created to be happy, and whom his Wiſdom has render'd ſo capable, and inſpir'd with ſuch invincible Deſires of Happineſs.

The only Uſe I ſhall make of this, is, to repreſent the Folly of the Atheiſt; who has Pride enough to think himſelf a *Genius* of deeper Penetration than the beſt, and wiſeſt, and greateſt Part of Mankind in all Ages; yet can entertain ſo low, ſo narrow, and ſordid an Opinion of his own Soul, as to imagine (and to value himſelf upon it) *That* he ſhall dye like a Beaſt; *That* the Nobleſt Powers of Reaſon and Underſtanding, were given him only to forage for the Senſes;

Senſes; And *that* when the Mechaniſm of his Body is broke, they will evaporate into Air, and leave him nothing for ever to turn to, but a cold diſmal Bed of Duſt and Darkneſs: A Principle ſo contrary to one of the Prime and Eſſential Inclinations of Human Nature, that were it poſſible to be aſcertain'd of the Truth of it, one would think a Man (for his own Sake) ſhould be ſorry to make the Diſcovery; and that for the Sake of Mankind in General, and out of a Principle of Good Nature, and Good Manners, he ſhould keep it to himſelf.

The Deſire of Self-Preſervation and Happineſs, is ſo ſtrongly implanted in us, that all the other Paſſions of our Nature are govern'd by it, and take their Ply from it: And therefore the Philoſophers of old made it a Queſtion, Whether it were better not to Be, or to be Miſerable? And ſome of them contended for an Unhappy Being, rather than none at all. And perhaps it may be ſtill a Queſtion, Whether ſome Degrees of Miſery are not more eligible than Annihilation?

So that the Atheiſt, one would think, tho' he believe nothing of a God or of a Future State, and the Immortality of the Soul, yet ſhould wiſh his Hypotheſis falſe, out of a Greatneſs of Spirit, and Generoſity of Mind; out of pure Reſpect to the Dignity and Excellency of his own Nature, and the Common Intereſt and Happineſs of Mankind.

In other Caſes, our Advantage and our Inclination govern our Belief: And the Principles of Religion want nothing to recommend them to our Reaſon and Approbation, but that we examine them with a *willing Mind*; and the greateſt Motives of Intereſt in the World, engage us to do that.

It muſt be own'd indeed, while a Man reſolves to live and dye in a Sinful Impenitent State, 'tis reaſonable enough for him to wiſh that there may be no Future Life; and this is the only Reaſon why Men

take Refuge in Atheiſm. 'Tis for this † *Lucretius* ſo much extols his Maſter *Epicurus*, that he deliver'd Men from the ſlaviſh Fears and Impreſſions of Religion. But alas! the Errors and Opinions of Men do not alter the Nature of Things: Thoſe ſtill remain the ſame, tho' we break a thouſand Jeſts upon them. If there be ſuch a Thing as Hell, all our Hopes, and Wiſhes, and Fine Thoughts, will not extinguiſh the Flames of it: And 'twill be but poor Conſolation to a Sinner, who ridicules the Torments of the Damn'd, to find himſelf at laſt confuted in the midſt of them.

In the Ordinary Concerns of Human Life, we think it more adviſable to prevent the Danger, than to run a Hazard: And certainly in an Affair of the laſt Importance to us, and on which an Eternity of Happineſs or Miſery depends, it concerns us to be infinitely more cautious; even tho' we had not thoſe Aſſurances of a Future Judgment which we have; and which will appear yet further from my Third Conſideration.

3*dly*. That of the Divine Juſtice.

Juſtice conſiſts in the equal Diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments, according to the Virtues or Demerits of Free Agents. But if there be no Future Account to be given of the Actions of Men; how can God be ſaid to Reward or Puniſh them accordingly? For as the Scene of Affairs is laid in this World, the Scales of Juſtice ſeem to be many times hard: Vice rides triumphant, is courted and careſs'd, and bears down all before it; whilſt Virtue is cruſh'd,

† Primum Graius homo mortaleis tollere contra
Eſt auſus. *Lib.* I.

and

and oppreſs'd and appears with meagre Looks, and a dejected Air.

Wicked Men raiſe their Fortunes upon the very Ruins of their Conſcience, their Honour and Integrity; whilſt good Men, upon a Principle, expoſe themſelves to the greateſt Troubles and Inconveniences of Life: So that nothing is more evident, than that the Rewards and Puniſhments of this Life, are not proportion'd to the Virtues and Sins of Men.

Seeing therefore we are aſſur'd, both from Reaſon and Revelation, that there is a God who judgeth in the Earth; that he is a lover of Righteouſneſs, and a hater of Iniquity; but yet according to the ordinary Courſe of Things in this World, *Solomon*'s Obſervation (*Eccleſ.* 6. 1.) holds ſtill good, *That a Man cannot judge of his Love or Hatred, by all that goeth before him*; it follows, in Order to the Vindication of the Divine Juſtice, that there is a Life to come, wherein Rewards and Puniſhments ſhall be diſpens'd after another manner; wherein God Almighty will compenſate the preſent Sufferings of good Men, with a Happineſs worthy of his Goodneſs; and call wicked Men to a ſevere Account for thoſe ſucceſsful Sins and Villanies, which eſcape with Impunity here.

This ſeeming Inequality of the Divine Favour to the Wicked, and of the Sufferings and Self-Denials of good Men, has been the Objection of * Atheiſtical, and the Complaint of † Pious Perſons in all Ages.

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* *Thus* Minucius Felix *introduces* Cæcilius, *reproaching the God of the* Chriſtians, *that he took no better Care of his Servants*: Egetis, algetis, opere, fame laboratis; & Deus patitur, diſſimulat: Non vult, aut non poteſt opitulari ſuis; ergo aut invalidus, aut iniquus eſt. *P.* 34.

† Pſal. 73. 5. Eccl. 7. 1. Jer. 12. 1.

Our Saviour himself thought fit to obviate the Difficulties that may arise in our Minds from the Consideration of it, in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares, which the Housholder would not suffer to be pluck'd up, but order'd that they should be let alone, and enjoy in common with the Wheat the Benefit of the Sun and the Rain, till the Time of Harvest. Plainly intimating to us, that God, in the Ordinary Course of his Providence, in the Distribution of Rewards and Punishments in this Life, makes no very Visible or Remarkable Distinction, betwixt Wicked and Good Men. And our Saviour assigns the Reason of it, *Ver.* 19. *Lest*, says he, *ye root up the Wheat with the Tares. i. e.* An End would soon be put to the whole Race of Mankind, if none but Good Men were suffer'd to live. Besides that, there would be an End too of all Virtue and Merit of Faith, if God should interpose by a continued Series of Miracles, to deliver Good Men from the common Accidents and Dangers, and Misfortunes incident to Human Life: Especially when he visits the World with Publick Calamities; as Pestilence, Famine, and the like. Such a continued Train of Miracles, is contrary to that Wise Order of Things he has establish'd; and therefore he causes the Clouds to Rain, and the *Sun to Shine, on the Evil, and on the Good*; and they indifferently partake of the kind Influences of the Heavens, and the Productions of the Earth. But then the Time of Harvest, which our Lord explains to be the Last Judgment, is drawing on; when he will make, not only a more Visible, but a Final Distinction between them, and eternally separate them from each other: *The Wheat he will gather into his Barn; but the Chaff he will burn with unquenchable Fire.*

So that tho' we cannot assign particular Reasons for many Events of Providence, for many seeming Inequalities of the Divine Dispensations here; yet

we

we may be assur'd, that at the Great Day of Retribution they will be perfectly clear'd up, and appear every way worthy of God; every way Just, and Wise, and Reasonable unto Men.

'Tis for this Reason the Apostle calls the Process of the Last Day, the *Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God.* Whereby he tacitly insinuates the Necessity of believing a Future Judgment, in Order to a Vindication of the Divine Justice; and that we can upon no other Principle, account for several Dark and Mysterious Passages of God's Providence in this World; the Promiscuous Distribution of the Blessings, and Evils of Life; the Impunity, and Prosperity of the greatest Sinners; and the Sufferings of the best of Men.

So that in all our Reasoning concerning the Difficulties of Providential Events in this Life, let us with the Prophet, *Jer.* 12. 1. lay it down as a previous and immutable Truth, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, when we plead with thee.*

But to conclude this Particular. Tho' we cannot enter into all the Reasons and *Arcana* of that Government, which God exercises upon Mankind; yet this One Consideration is sufficient to acquit his Justice in it: *Tho' Darkness is his Secret Place, and his Pavilion round about him are Dark Waters, and Thick Clouds*; impenetrable to Human Eyes; *yet Righteousness and Judgment are the Habitation of his Seat.*

I proceed to my Second Particular, to shew,

2. That the Great Influence Religion has upon the Minds of Men, proceeds from the Belief of a Future Judgment.

I need not much insist upon the Proof of this: If there be no Future Life, the Supreme Good, the great End of Man, must lye in his present Happiness and Enjoyment. And who can blame Men, for pursuing their great and main Interest, tho' it be to the Ruin of those who stand in their Way? Is it not every Man's Wisdom to provide for himself, and to act upon one of the most strong and invincible Inclinations of Human Nature? This Consideration seems to give us the most probable Account of that Passage; where 'tis said, *The Lord commended the Unjust Steward, because he had done wisely*, Luke 16. 8. that is, upon Supposition that Men believe nothing of another Life, which likely was the Case of the Unjust Steward, 'tis reasonable, and then I see not why it should not be commendable too, for them to consult their own Safety and Advantage, by all the Ways and Means that conduce to them; because the Law of Self-Interest and Preservation, is the Primary, the Sovereign, and most Inviolable of all others.

Accordingly the Author of the Book of Wisdom, very naturally represents the Atheists in these Words, encouraging one another to the most inhuman Acts of Violence and Injustice. *Let us*, say they, *oppress the poor righteous Man; let us not spare the Widow, nor reverence the Ancient grey Hairs of the Aged; let our Strength be the Law of Justice; for that which is feeble, is found to be nothing worth*, Chap. 2. V. 10, 11. The Sense of which is, that no Atheist can be bound by any Laws or Engagements, when he can with Safety and Impunity transgress them, and 'tis his Interest to do it: The greatest Security of the Civil Rights, and Interest of Men, is an Oath; which yet 'tis a Contradiction to suppose, that a Man who believes there is no Tye upon Conscience, should make any Conscience of.

From

From whence I infer, that a Man who profeſſes himſelf an Atheiſt, is no longer fit to live in the World, at leaſt in Society, and under Government; but ought to be thankful for a Toleration to turn Hermit, and to paſs his Days in a Deſart, or under Ground.

And as viſibly do the Principles of Atheiſm tend to corrupt our Minds, and open a Door to all manner of Intemperance and Diſorder. For this we have the Authority of the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 15. Where upon the moſt ſolemn Occaſion, and in one of the moſt moving Diſcourſes in the whole Bible, he brings in the *Epicurean* pertly objecting to him, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die*; i. e. What is all this Doctrine of the Reſurrection, and the Preparatory Duties to it, to thoſe who believe nothing of the matter? Is it not better to divert ſuch crabbed and troubleſome Notions by Eating and Drinking, and following our Pleaſures; and ſeeing our Time is ſo ſhort and uncertain, to make the beſt Uſe and Improvement of it, while 'tis in our own Diſpoſition? This is the Language of the Atheiſt, in the Senſe of the Apoſtle, and in the Experience of all Mankind.

There are but Two Pretences, upon which the Atheiſt can lay any Claim to Morality: The Firſt is from the natural Tendence (as we have obſerv'd) that Moral Virtue has to promote our Happineſs, and Well-being here. To which I anſwer, that tho' this is generally true, yet it fails in a great many particular Inſtances; and in ſuch Caſes, the Atheiſt is ſo far from having any Engagement upon him, to obſerve the Rules of what we call Moral Virtue, that he is oblig'd, upon his own Principles, to act in Oppoſition to them: It generally conduces to our Intereſt, our Reputation, and Eaſe, to live Righteouſly and Soberly; but yet a Man, who only conſults his preſent Advantage, in all theſe Reſpects, will find it convenient, on certain Occaſions, to alter his Meaſures

ſures again. 'Tis certainly more for the Good of the Community, for a Man to be Honeſt and Regular in his Conduct: But this can have no Influence upon an Atheiſt, when his private Advantage by an indirect and criminal Practice, will more than compenſate the Loſs he ſuſtains in the Publick.

So that all the Atheiſt has to ſay for himſelf, and why he ſhould be ſuffer'd to live in Society, is this, that an inbred Greatneſs of Mind, and a Senſe of Honour and Generoſity, will ſecure him from the ill Conſequences which we charge upon his Principles.

Theſe are all fine Terms, and it muſt be own'd, the Heathen Moraliſts, who abhor'd Atheiſm, have ſaid many Things well upon the Credit of them, in Order to enforce the Practice of Moral Duties. They tell us, that Sin is the Scandal and Reproach of Human Nature; that we ought not to be guilty, merely for the ſake of its own Reflection; that Virtue has intrinſick Charms and Beauties, to recommend it ſelf to our Choice; and that it is its own Reward abſtracting from the Regards of a Future Life.

But theſe, how plauſible ſoever, were found in the Tryal to be but Airy, and Jejune Notions; which, when Men were ready to periſh with Hunger or Nakedneſs, afforded them but ſmall Relief. Nature, on theſe Occaſions, was too ſtrong for a fine Thought; and a Senſe of Honour, and Greatneſs of Mind, eaſily gave way to the craving Appetites of it.

And indeed, in Caſes of great and preſſing Temptations, when our Paſſions are violently agitated, when our Eyes are fill'd with the viſible Glories of the World, and we are touch'd with the ſoft Allurements to Pleaſure, the Names of Virtue and Vice, of Honour and Scandal, have but a feeble Operation; nothing under ſuch Solicitations can protect our Innocence, and bring us ſecurely off, but *the Powers of the World to come*; and theſe, by the Grace of God, *will* do it.

No

No one had a greater Idea of Honour and Generosity of Mind, or was a nobler Instance of it, than *Joseph*: He had a just Sense of his Obligations to his Master, of the Favours conferr'd on him, and the Confidence reposed in him; yet he durst not trust his Virtue wholly upon a Point of Honour, under a Temptation he was Day by Day importun'd with; a Temptation impregnated by all the insinuating Arts and Caresses of a lascivious Woman, his Mistress, and a Person of Distinction; but he wisely takes the Consideration of God into the Account, and that determines him in his Noble and Pious Resolution; *How*, says he, *shall I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?*

Besides that, this innate Greatness of Mind, which Atheistical Wits pretend to found their Morality upon, is a Term of great Latitude and Extent, and is frequently made to signify quite contrary to its proper and genuine Sense: which imports a generous Disdain of every thing that is mean, and base, and below the Dignity of Human Nature: But if we look into our Stage-Performances, Comedies especially, which have tended so much to Corrupt and Debauch the bravest Nation under Heaven, we shall there find Honour frequently, in the principal Characters, understood only with Respect to External Decency and Reputation.

A Lady of Honour engages in a vicious Intrigue; a fine Gentleman abuses his Friend, his Patron, and Benefactor; but all the Dishonour lies in the Discovery: Nay it often happens, that the offending Parties go off with Impunity and Applause, and the whole Disgrace falls upon the Head of the Party injur'd.

So much has the Stage, which was originally design'd to give Men Just and Noble Sentiments of Virtue, contributed to unsettle the very Notion of it, and confound the natural Distinction of Good

and

and Evil: For here it is that the young Fellows, the Flower of the Nobility and Gentry, too frequently model their Conduct, and take the Characters of what is Honourable and Brave: Here it is that they obſerve Virtue and Vice ſignify little or nothing in themſelves, but only in common Opinion; which, if they take Care to govern their Conduct by, they are at Liberty to comply with all the popular and prevailing Vices of the Age; for that they who govern the Mode, have the ſame Power which *Bellarmin* aſcribes to the Pope, of calling Good Evil, and Evil Good, and paſſing it into a Law when they have done. But admitting the popular Notion of Honour was leſs precarious, and that we were acted by a true and genuine Senſe of it; yet in this degenerate State of Human Nature, there is ſo ſtrong a Byaſs caſt upon our Will, that without Regard to a higher Principle, all the Dictates of Reaſon and Underſtanding are not a ſufficient Counterpoiſe for it. Thoſe who live in the Hopes of a Glorious Immortality, thoſe who believe the Terrors of the Lord, and a Future State of Puniſhment, find it hard enough to guard their Innocence againſt the Temptations, which ſo frequently occur in a corrupt World, and which corrupt Nature ſo powerfully diſpoſes us to.

He that made us, and beſt knows the Force and Strength of our Minds, has thought neceſſary to enforce our Duty, by the Propoſal of Rewards and Puniſhments; and thoſe *Myſticks*, who would diſcard the Paſſions of Hope and Fear, as ſervile and unneceſſary Motives to Piety, have done as little Service to Religion, as Honour to the Wiſdom of God. The Apoſtle, whoſe Zeal and Charity were ſo flaming, had other Sentiments: *This* (ſays he) *is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith*, 1 John 5. 4.

I have

I have in this Discourse principally consider'd the Influence of a future Judgment, without respect to the Authority of Divine Revelation; but this opens to us a new Prospect, and discovers several Circumstances of it, which natural Reason could never have given us any certain Knowledge of. As that the Person who shall judge us, is Jesus Christ; He, who has done and suffer'd so much for us Men, and our Salvation; and surely no Judgment is so heavy, as that which comes from the Mouth of our Saviour, no Condemnation so insupportable as that which is denounc'd by one, who has left no Method of Kindness unattempted, to deliver us from it.

The Holy Scriptures further reveal to us, what was not so easily made out by the Light of Natural Reason, that these frail and corruptible Bodies shall, at the great Day of Retribution, be raised to Life again, a Life immortal as the Soul, to which they shall be reunited.

That the Soul was immortal, the Philosophers argu'd very well, from the Properties and Operations of it; which they were never able, and I believe no Man ever will be, to reconcile with the Idea of separable extended Substance. This was a just Reason for them to conclude, that the Soul being a simple, pure, uncompounded Essence, was not subject to Death or Dissolution, but that after this Life it retir'd to some Place of Happiness or Misery, according as its Virtues or its Vices entitled it. *Cicero*, as he confesses from *Plato*, urges this * Argument with his usual Force and Perspicuity.

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* Et cum simplex animi natura esset, neque haberet, in se quicquam admixtum dispar sui atq; dissimile non posse eum dividi quod si non posset, non posse interire. De senectute. *And again*, Tusc. Quest. animatum nulla interris origo inveniri potest, nihil enim est in animis mixtum atque concretum, &c.

Those

Thoſe who repreſent the Doctrine of the Soul's Immortality as mere heatheniſh Invention, ſupported ſtill by Chriſtians, eſpecially Eccleſiaſticks, upon the ſame ſcandalous Motives it was firſt taken up; theſe Men, I ſay, before they had advanc'd ſuch a bold and inſolent Charge, which affects the beſt and wiſeſt of Chriſtians in all Ages, ought, after another manner at leaſt, to have confuted thoſe Arguments the Heathens themſelves have urg'd for the Immorality of the Soul. 'Tis not a Breach of Charity to ſuppoſe that Men have no great Devotion for Reveal'd, who endeavour to overthrow the Foundations of Natural Religion, without ſhewing any Reaſons for it, or ſuch Reaſons as are worſe than none. For ſo we are told, without any Regard to the Proofs upon which the Heathens aſſerted the Immortality of the Soul, that the Doctrine of it took its firſt Riſe in *Egypt*, from the Funeral Rites of that People, and the Care they took in preſerving their Dead. So that had it not been for the *Egyptian* Mummies, that gave the firſt Hint to this Notion, it may be a Queſtion, whether all the Wit and Ingenuity of Men could have hit upon it to this Day. 'Tis a wonder how Men of Parts can banter the World, and trifle ſo ſeriouſly; but 'tis more ſtrange, that a Principle, founded upon ſuch Reaſons as could never be confuted, and which it ſo nearly concerns every Man to enquire into the Truth of, ſhould not be known in the World, before the *Egyptians* found out the Secret of Embalming; that is, for ſome thouſands of Years. Men that would ſearch impartially into the Nature and Origin of Things, would rather have conſider'd the Care the *Egyptians* took of their Dead, as an Effect of their believing the Soul Immortal, than the Cauſe of ſuch a Belief; nay, if there be no Foundation in Nature for the Belief of the Soul's Immortality, it ſeems as reaſonable that the *Egyptians*, by ſo carefully preſerving their Dead, ſhould have given Occaſi-

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on for as general a Belief also, of the Resurrection of the Body. And yet the *Athenians*, who were no Strangers to the Manners or Learning of the *Egyptians*, tho' they mocked at St. *Paul*, when they heard of the Resurrection of the Dead; nay, some of them understood so little what it meant, that they took it for a God: Yet when the Apostle discours'd to them, *Acts* 17. 32. 6. 31. of a Future Judgment, which supposes the Future Life of the Soul, they made no Dispute of it. That there is a Judgment to come, was an Article of their own Creed; their own Consciences, and the universal Sense and Reason of Mankind, had already instructed them in this Principle.

I shall now speak a Word or two by way of Inference, and so conclude.

And *1st.* Either you do believe there is a Judgment to come, or you do not? If you do not, then that which I have said, may, by the Blessing of God, be proper to convince you of the Folly and Unreasonableness of your Infidelity, in rejecting a Principle so agreeable to the natural Notions and Apprehensions of Mankind; to those natural Desires all Men have after a State of Happiness; to our Ideas of the Divine Attributes; and lastly, of such dangerous Consequence to those, who do not believe it, in case it should prove true: And I hope I have sufficiently evinc'd the Truth of it.

But on the other Hand, if you do believe there is a Judgment to come, pray consider the great and powerful Engagments you are under to a Virtuous and Holy Life: All the Advantages of Fortune and Wit, of Learning and Politeness, which Men are so apt to value themselves upon here, will at the Great Day of Account do us no Service, any further than they have render'd us more instrumental in promoting the Honour of God, and the Interests of Religion:

gion: Nay, if our Returns be not answerable to our several Receipts, 'tis but just God should proportion his Punishments, according to the Measures of his despis'd and abus'd Mercies. Let us therefore so endeavour to improve the Time, and the Talents committed unto us, that when God comes to call for our Accounts, we may not be afraid or asham'd to give them in; that our Consciences may have no neglect or abuse of them to challenge and reproach us for.

Let us consider what manner of Men we Christians especially ought to be, in all godly Conversation and Honesty, looking for the Coming and Appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom the Father hath committed all Judgment; we Christians, I say, who besides the natural Light of our own Minds, have an infallible Authority, a sure Word of Prophecy to confirm the Truth and Certainty of a Future Judgment to us. We to whom the Wrath of God is reveal'd from Heaven against all Ungodliness; and Unrighteousness of Men, but more particularly against those who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness; so that it will be no Advantage to us, to be Members of the best constituted Church upon Earth, both for the Purity of its Doctrine, the Primitive Order of its Government, and the universal Advancement of Piety, without acting conformably to the Engagements these Advantages bring us under. How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation? If we sin against so much Light, against so many gracious and peculiar Favours of Heaven?

2*dly*, If we believe a Future Judgment, let us not defer our Preparation for it; Time runs off a-pace, and the Night comes on wherein we cannot work; we know not how soon Death may surprize us, and as that leaves Men, Judgment will certainly find them. We are apt to flatter our selves in a sinful

Course

Course of Life, with the Hopes of a Repentance in Reversion; but there is no Sinner who makes any Reflections on his own Conduct, but perceives, the longer he defers his Conversion, the greater Difficulties and Temptations he has still to conflict withal; and certainly 'tis the greatest Imprudence Men can be guilty of, to defer a Work, which of all others is the most necessary to be done, and which doubles upon our Hands, the longer we delay to do it: Besides, that the same Pretences, upon which we now shift off our Repentance, will, in all Probability, be as prevailing hereafter; for the only Reason why Men do not immediately reform their corrupt Manners, is this, That they find themselves at present under the Power of some vicious Inclination, or indisposed to the Duties of Religion; but when that Future Time comes which they have assign'd for their Repentance, the same Reasons will return with it: Their vicious Passions will still furnish them with the same Pretences for a further Delay; so that, if there be any good Ground from the Power of a present Temptation, or our Indisposition to the Duties of Repentance, why we should still put it off, we must lay aside the *Thoughts* of ever repenting at all. Some Libertines seem to be so apprehensive of this, that they resolve to give themselves no trouble about their Conversion, till the Time of Temptation, as they imagine, is over; till they Experience in themselves the Decays of Nature, and the near Approaches of Death: That is, they will be willing to surrender themselves when they can hold out and maintain their Rebellion no longer; when they are past the Service of their Sins, wherein they have spent the Flower of Life, they will sacrifice the Dregs of Old Age, or a few of their last Moments, to the Service of God. Now this is so unworthy, so provoking an Abuse of the Divine Goodness, that tho' I will not positively determine, whether God after all may forgive such Sinners; yet

if they have any Senſe of Ingenuity, one would think they ſhould not be able to forgive themſelves.

I ſhall but make one Improvement more of what has been ſaid; and 'tis this, That ſeeing our Lord, at his coming to judge the World, does particularly repreſent himſelf as puniſhing or rewarding Men, according to the good Offices they have done, or omitted to do, in Acts of Mercy and Charity, we ought to be particularly careful to perform theſe Duties, to embrace all Opportunities of expreſſing our Compaſſion and Beneficence; of having Mercy upon one another here, that God, when he comes to Judgment, may have Mercy on us. *Amen.*

FINIS.